



# HUNTER

PSYCHOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

*A chance to  
Grow,  
Connect,  
and share Compassion.*

## CBT Group Workbook

Hunter Psychological Services

Group Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## Table of Contents

### WEEK 1

03

#### INTRODUCTION TO THOUGHTS

Understand the role of thoughts in influencing our feelings, actions, and behaviours.

### WEEK 2

12

#### THOUGHT CHALLENGING

Learn to challenge our thoughts by asking questions about our thoughts and gathering evidence.

### WEEK 3

16

#### SADNESS

Begin to learn more about our emotions, starting with Sadness.

### WEEK 4

22

#### RELATIONSHIPS

Investigate some individual life issues, starting with Relationships.

### WEEK 5

26

#### TESTING OUR BELIEFS

Learn how to test the beliefs we have learnt that we have through behaviour experiments.

### WEEK 6

31

#### WORRY

Learn about anxiety and how we can test whether our behaviours are making our anxiety better or worse.

### WEEK 7

36

#### SLEEP

Learn about how much sleep we need and positive sleep behaviours.

### WEEK 8

41

#### HEALTH

Learn about three types of health and assess what you could improve in your health.

### WEEK 9

47

#### SELF ESTEEM

Check in with your self esteem and figure out how to improve it.

### WEEK 10

53

#### WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

Summary of the things you have gone through and the main points.



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## **WEEK 1**

# **Introduction to Thoughts**

### **This Week**

1. Group rules
2. Ice breaker questions
3. Learning about CBT
4. Group and individual goals
5. How to identify core beliefs and unhelpful thinking styles
6. The ABC's of thought diaries



### Group Rules

- 1. **If you decide to leave the group, you are welcome back at any time.**
  - a. Even if you call and say you don't want to come anymore, you can return at any point.
  - b. Members must contact the clinic prior to the session if they are going to be late or miss a session.
  - c. Do not be late unless you have contacted the clinic. This helps to ensure sessions begin on time.
  
- 2. **Group members are supportive and kind and:**
  - a. Validate, avoid judging, and assume the best of other group members.
  - b. Provide helpful feedback when asked.
  - c. Outside of the group, don't talk about what other group members have said in the group.
  
- 3. **Members do not tempt others to engage in problem behaviours:**
  - a. Don't attend the session if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
  - b. Don't discuss problem behaviours that could be contagious to others including self-harm or substance use.
  
- 4. **Members don't form *confidential* relationships with each other outside the group:**  
 Don't begin relationships that cannot be discussed in group.



Rules that you want to set for yourself (eg. Be kind to both yourself and others in your weaknesses, as we all have them.)

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## Ice Breaker Questions

This activity is to help you get to know something about yourself and others you may not have known. Pick a question and write your answer underneath. The questions are hopefully slightly interesting.

If you could bring back any fashion trend, what would it be?

If you were famous, what would you want to be famous for?

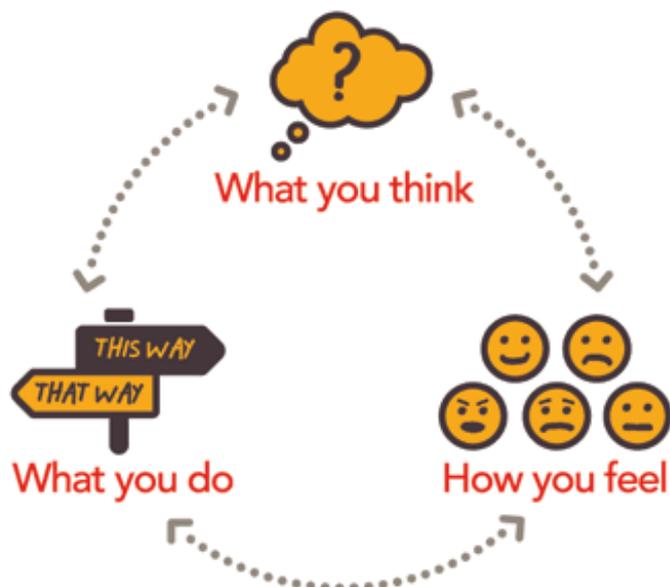
You can have anyone fictional as your imaginary friend, who do you choose and why?

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?



## What is BT?

**Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)** is a type of therapy that focuses on the interaction between our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours/environment. This mode of therapy acknowledges the importance of things that have happened in the past, although focuses on the impacts in the here and now. To do this, we begin breaking down recent overwhelming experiences and inspecting them like detectives to understand what has happened and what was helpful or unhelpful.



**Cognitive Therapy** aims to reduce the intensity of our distressing emotions and self-defeating behaviour through modifying our unhelpful (and often unrealistic) thoughts and core beliefs. In this group we will learn how to do a “thought diary” to address any maladaptive thinking styles. We will focus on these diaries a lot because the goal is to eventually engage in breaking down our thinking styles using this model within each distressing moment, which takes a lot of practice.

**Behavioural Therapy** assumes that the way we behave has a strong influence over our

thoughts and emotions. Like thought diaries, we will also be focusing on behavioural experiments. These experiments will help you to see if the situations you engage in are helpful or not. We will test behaviours like a scientist does in their experiments, we will general hypothesis or prediction of what might happen in certain situations and then check whether we were objectively correct.

Please know that this group is not a comprehensive training or therapy on CBT, however it will teach you the fundamentals and will aim to give you things to go away from the group to practice individually.

About Viki (your group facilitator): If any of my clients were to explain me as a therapist, I think they would use the word eclectic or not very directive. I may sway from the workbook and use metaphors etc. that are not in the handouts. If you get lost, just sit tight and I should bring things back around to the workbook.

### **FINAL NOTE! CBT emphasises the importance of homework!!!**

CBT can be tailored to work with different individuals and groups, and you can pick and choose whatever tools we cover in this group that work for you. However, none of them will work straight away or come easy straight away. Homework is a key component of CBT. Doing homework for CBT basically means that week to week, you will need to practice the new skills that you are learning and apply them to your daily life. Unless you practice the new strategies that you learn, you will not use them very well, and you will probably forget to use them when you need them most: when you are feeling very anxious or distressed.



## Goals of the Group

These goals are a brief outline and direction for the group. You can read them as some easy homework throughout the week.

**Week 1:** Understand the role of thoughts in influencing our feelings, actions, and behaviours.

**Week 2:** Learn to challenge our thoughts by asking questions about our thoughts and gathering evidence.

**Week 3:** Begin to learn more about our emotions, starting with Sadness.

**Weeks 4:** Beginning to investigate individual life issues, starting with Relationships.

**Week 5:** Learn how to test the beliefs we have learnt that we have through behaviour experiments.

**Week 6:** Learn about anxiety, how it differs from worry, and how we can begin to test whether our behaviours are making our anxiety better or worse.

**Week 7-9:** Cover a new topic each week (sleep, health, and self esteem) to learn what is best for our mind and body and to test how our behaviours impact our experience of the world.

**Week 10:** Summary of all the information we have learned.

### What we aim to improve on:

- Lowering automatically jumping to conclusions and using other unhelpful thinking styles
- Avoidance of feared situations
- Improving our awareness for behaviours that are helpful vs unhelpful.

### Skills to Increase

- Thought challenging and evidence gathering skills.
- Understanding what behaviours are conducive to improving mood
- Sleep hygiene and general self-care techniques

## My Own Goals

Write down some goals about what you would like to achieve. You can either write something that is above, or you can write your own goal.

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## Identifying Core Beliefs

Before talking about thought diaries, it will be helpful to discuss an aspect of the diaries that can be tricky. Getting from thoughts to core beliefs is important and at times difficult.

A core belief is a belief that you have about yourself which is typically driving many of the racing and distressing thoughts in situations where uncomfortable emotions arise. Figuring out your core belief often involves looking beyond the initial negative thoughts that you recall of the situation and figure out “What negative feelings about myself does this situation bring up for me?”. To dig up these core beliefs, we could use thought discovery questions such as: “if my thoughts are true, what do they mean about me?”. To further demonstrate, we will go through an example.

### Example

“This get together is terrible. I don’t want to be here.”

**I don’t want to be here because...?**

“Nobody is talking to me”

**And what is bad about that...?**

“It makes me look like a loner without any friends!”

**So what does that say about me?**

“That I am a loner”

In the above example, the superficial thought was “this get together is terrible, I don’t want to be here”. After applying the thought discovery questions, the hot thought causing the most distress was actually “I am a loner”.

**This core belief is then the one that will be disputed further on in the thought diary.**



## Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Some uncomfortable emotions such as sadness or worry can occur after engaging in unhelpful thinking styles. They can develop a habit by occurring over and over in our head without us even being aware. This page highlights the main unhelpful thinking styles to aid in identifying any thought traps you experience. Can you identify any unhelpful thinking styles you may use?

### “Should”ing and “Must”ing

This style of thinking is when we start saying we “should or must do something.” This begins a frame of mind that allows expectations and can put unreasonable pressure on us.

### Labelling

We label those around us and ourselves by making assumptions around specific situations. This label can sometimes occur even if there are other labels that may more accurately fit the situation.

### Magnification and Minimisation

This style of thinking leads to magnifying the positives in others such as “That person is so nice to everyone.” and minimise the positives in us such as “I’m never that nice.” This often leads to explaining away our positive achievements because someone else’s may seem bigger.

### Mental Filter

This involves filtering out parts of a situation. You may filter out all the good parts and only see the negative in a situation. Such as a friend ignoring one message you sent and that is then all you think about even though they have replied to every other message you’ve sent in the past.

### Overgeneralising

This is when we take a past experience or outcome and put it on all current or future events. Such as “Everyone is...” or “I always...”

### Jumping to Conclusions

This occurs when we attempt to know what someone else is thinking, as well as when we try to predict the future. This can happen with friends, family, and all kinds of situations.

### Catastrophising

This is when we begin expecting worst-case scenarios to happen. We expect the worst to happen with everything even when it is the most unlikely outcome.

### Black and white thinking

This type of thinking is when we begin to see things as “all good” or “all bad”. For example a friend may seem “all bad” but they in fact only made a mistake and didn’t mean it.

### Personalisation

Sometimes we can believe that everything negative that happens was our fault. We blame ourselves when sometimes we do not have any influence on the events.

### Emotional reasoning

This thinking style involves basing your view of situations or yourself on the way you are feeling. For example, the only evidence that something bad is going to happen is that you feel like something bad is going to happen.

Now, have a think about which of these you engage in and discuss how you may reduce them.



## The “Thought Diary”: ABC’s

We will start to learn about thought diaries this week, which will become a big part of the group. This week we will start with the ABC and next week will be D and E.

Purpose of the thought diary:

- Observe the feelings are always valid, even if not an accurate representation of reality.
- Thoughts and core beliefs can drive our emotions and behaviours.
- Exploring the evidence about core beliefs to identify accuracy.

Below is an example and chance to do your own A, B, C of the diary.

### Activating Event

What was the event/situation? (can be a physical event or a mental one such as a thought or image).

*Example: I walk into the kitchen to make a coffee, and someone comes in asking a heap of questions about my upcoming birthday.*

Your event: \_\_\_\_\_

### Beliefs and Core Beliefs

What were your thoughts at the time? Underline the most distressing (core beliefs) and rate how much you believe it (0-100%).

*Example: “I do not want to talk about this right now. Just choose for yourself and leave me alone.”*

*Ask yourself, why is this bad?*

*“I just don’t want to talk to anyone because my friend went away.”*

*What does that mean about me?*

*“I am not good enough for my friend to stay.”*

Your thoughts and core belief: \_\_\_\_\_

### Consequences

What did you feel emotionally? Underline the strongest emotion and rate it’s intensity (0-100%). What did you feel physically in your body? What action/behaviour did you take?

*Example: Intensely sad because earlier in the week my friend moved away.*

*I appeared frustrated by telling them to go away and I’m not in the mood. This didn’t help, it hurt the person’s feeling and they were being nice*

Your experiences following your event: \_\_\_\_\_



## Homework: Thought Diary

### Activating Event

What was the event/situation? (can be a physical event or a mental one such as a thought or image).

### Beliefs and Core Beliefs

What were your thoughts at the time? Underline the most distressing (core beliefs) and rate how much you believe it (0-100%).

### Consequences

What did you feel emotionally? Underline the strongest emotion and rate its intensity (0-100%). What did you feel physically in your body? What action/behaviour did you take?



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## WEEK 2

# Thought Challenging

### This week

1. Recap of A B C's from last week and check in for homework.
2. Challenging our unhelpful thinking styles and a practice session in breakout rooms.
3. Working through a difficult feeling from the last week in a thought diary and learning how to dispute our core beliefs and create new, more balanced thoughts to begin altering core beliefs.



## Ways to Challenge Unhelpful Thinking

### For all thoughts

- How likely is it that my thought will come true?
- How often has this happened to me/other people?
- Is this your responsibility?
- What if the worst happens, how bad would it be?

### When you are expecting something bad will happen

- What is the best/worst thing that could happen?
- What is the evidence that this will not happen?
- What else could happen?
- Could you survive if it does happen?

### When your thought is about another person's thoughts or actions

- Are there other explanations for how the other person reacted?
- How do you know what the other person is thinking?
- What else could they be thinking?
- What would you think if the roles were reversed?

### When you are being very critical of yourself

- Am I blaming myself for something that I am not really responsible for?
- Are my expectations of myself too high and unrealistic?
- Am I making too much out of a mistake? (everyone makes mistakes)
- Am I beating myself up without acknowledging my strengths and achievements?

### When you are thinking about how things have been or should be

- Are your expectations unreasonable?
- Are you expecting more from yourself than you would from others?
- How will this look in two weeks/months/years time?
- What are the chances of this happening?
- How many times have you already faced this situation? – What happened?
- What are you basing your assumptions on?
- If you had a friend in this situation, what would you say to them?

### When you have decided what the outcome will be

- Are you jumping to the conclusion that this will be the outcome?
- Have you coped with similar situations in the past?
- What is the most likely outcome?
- What happens to other people in this situation?
- Can you really control what happens?

### When you feel fed up with your life

- Is the problem as bad as I am making it out?
- Do I need to put the situation into perspective?
- Have I taken into account all the good things in my life as well as the bad?
- Is this a temporary feeling that will pass



## Thought Diary

### Activating Event

What was the event/situation that preceded an uncomfortable emotion or situation? (Can be a physical event or a mental one such as a thought or image).

### Beliefs:

What were your thoughts at the time? Once you have a few thoughts, begin to consider what might be some underlying core beliefs? (What is bad about that or me? Etc.)

Can you identify any unhelpful thinking styles?

### Consequences:

What did you feel emotionally? How did you know that's what you felt?

What action/behaviour did you engage in and was it helpful?



## Disputation

What **objective** evidence do you have that your core belief is true?

What **objective** evidence is there against your core belief?

In what ways could you dispute your original unhelpful thoughts? Refer to handout “Ways to challenge unhelpful thinking” for some ideas.

## End Result

Based on the evidence you have collected in section D, what is an alternative, more balanced, and helpful thought?



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## **WEEK 3**

# **Sadness**

### **This week**

1. Check in with thought diary from last week/homework.
2. Information about what it means to be sad.
3. Information on how depression presents.
4. Activity for the week – a thought diary about a time that you have felt sad over the past week.





## What is Depression?

When sadness doesn't seem to go away or morphs into something else, people can start to experience a mood disorder called depression (Major Depressive Disorder). Depression is one of the most common mental health disorders and many of you will have experienced some experience of depression from time to time. Due to this we will spend a short time learning the signs and symptoms of depression because whilst depression is common, it is by no means simple or easy to overcome and those with significant depressive episodes struggle with its impacts in a range of different areas.



### Mood

Depression is classified as a mood disorder in the DSM 5 (the diagnostic manual for mental health). Individuals who are depressed describe their mood as having been low mood for longer than two weeks. In mild forms of depression, individuals may not feel bad all day but still describe a sadness or hopelessness for much of the day and an overall sense of feeling blue. Their mood may lift with a positive experience but fall again with even a minor disappointment. In severe depression, a low mood could persist throughout the day, failing to lift even when pleasant things occur.

### Thinking

Individuals who are depressed think in certain ways. They tend to see themselves in a negative light. Often their self-esteem and self-confidence become very low. They may dwell on how bad they feel, negative events from the past, how the world is terrible, or how hopeless everything is.

### Physical

Some people also experience physical symptoms of depression, such as:

- Changes in sleep patterns.
- A decline in appetite may decline leading to possible weight loss, or some people may find themselves eating more than usual and gaining weight.
- Sexual interest may decline.
- Energy levels may fall, as does motivation to carry out everyday activities. Depressed individuals may stop doing the things they used to enjoy because they feel unmotivated or lethargic.

### Interacting with Other People

Many depressed people express concern about their personal relationships. They may become unhappy and dissatisfied with their family, and other close, relationships. They may feel shy and anxious when they are with other people, especially in a group. They may feel lonely and isolated, yet at the same time, are unwilling or unable to reach out to others, even when they have the opportunities for doing so.



## ACTIVITY TIME

Now that we have become more aware of our feelings, we are going to do a full thought diary based on a time in the past few months that you felt your mood was abnormally low and spent a good part of the day feeling sad. If you've experienced a severe depressive episode or a particularly memorable one longer than 6 months ago, feel free to work through some of those thoughts, but remember you have to be able to identify the event that occurred right before you had the thoughts.



## QUICK REMINDER

Please remember the group rules of not disclosing a lot of detail about self-harm or suicidal behaviours. Generalised information such as "I had suicidal thoughts" is ok, but please refrain from going into any details about plans, intent etc.

If you find you are overwhelmed and need to discuss anything, please send the facilitator a text or email on 0450799599 or [victoria@hunterpsych.com.au](mailto:victoria@hunterpsych.com.au) and she will facilitate a breakout room with you as early as she possibly can.



## Thought Diary

### Activating Event

What was the event/situation that preceded an uncomfortable emotion or situation? (Can be a physical event or a mental one such as a thought or image).

### Beliefs:

What were your thoughts at the time? Once you have a few thoughts, begin to consider what might be some underlying core beliefs? (What is bad about that or me? Etc.)

Can you identify any unhelpful thinking styles?

### Consequences:

What did you feel emotionally? How did you know that's what you felt?

What action/behaviour did you engage in and was it helpful?



## Disputation

What **objective** evidence do you have that your core belief is true?

What **objective** evidence is there against your core belief?

In what ways could you dispute your original unhelpful thoughts? Refer to handout “Ways to challenge unhelpful thinking” for some ideas.

## End Result

Based on the evidence you have collected in section D, what is an alternative, more balanced, and helpful thought?



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# WEEK 4

## Relationships

### This Week

1. What are interpersonal problems?
2. Your common thoughts in relationships.
3. Thought Diary



## What are interpersonal problem?

A variety of successful relationships (intimate, friendship, acquaintances, or family) are essential for a person to thrive and not just survive. Problems between people (interpersonal problems) are difficulties that involve two or more people and can include issues in their reactions to you, or struggles in the ways individual's relate to you or the ways you relate to other people.

**People may encounter interpersonal problems in many domains of their life, including:**

- Problems at work.
- Problems in social situations.
- Problems initiating or maintaining friendships.
- Problems in intimate relationships.
- Problems in online relationships.



Interpersonal problems can play out in many ways. People may feel like they don't 'fit in' and feel uncomfortable in social situations; they may react in an aggressive manner, avoid emotional closeness, or repeatedly enter relationships that are abusive or unfulfilling, amongst other reasons.

People often have a range of unhelpful thoughts surrounding relationships that engage in unhelpful thinking styles learned earlier in the group. Can you

come up with some unhelpful thoughts that you might have about relationships and what thinking styles they are?

## Your Common Thoughts in Relationships

Thought	Unhelpful Thinking Style
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	



## Thought Diary

### Activating Event

What was the event/situation that preceded an uncomfortable emotion or situation? (Can be a physical event or a mental one such as a thought or image).

### Beliefs:

What were your thoughts at the time? Once you have a few thoughts, begin to consider what might be some underlying core beliefs? (What is bad about that or me? Etc.)

Can you identify any unhelpful thinking styles?

### Consequences:

What did you feel emotionally? How did you know that's what you felt?

What action/behaviour did you engage in and was it helpful?



## Disputation

What **objective** evidence do you have that your core belief is true?

What **objective** evidence is there against your core belief?

In what ways could you dispute your original unhelpful thoughts? Refer to handout “Ways to challenge unhelpful thinking” for some ideas.

## End Result

Based on the evidence you have collected in section D, what is an alternative, more balanced, and helpful thought?



## WEEK 5

# Testing Our Beliefs

### This week

1. Learning about what our negative predictions and their impact on the outcome of situations.
2. Behavioural experiment practice.
3. Deep breathing exercise when overwhelmed and wanting to act in a more adaptive way.



## Negative Predictions

Many people who suffer from anxiety, depression or low self-esteem tend to make negative predictions about how certain situations will turn out. You may tend to:

- a. Overestimate the likelihood that bad things will happen or that something will go wrong.
- b. Exaggerate how bad things will be.
- c. Underestimate your ability to deal with things if they don't go well.
- d. Ignore other factors in the situation which suggest that things will not be as bad as you are predicting.

When you jump to such negative conclusions about the future, you will tend to engage in unhelpful behaviours. You may tend to:

- a. Avoid the situation completely.
- b. Try the situation out but escape when things seem too difficult.
- c. Be overly cautious and engage in safety behaviours (e.g., spend the whole time at the social event looking at your phone).

The problem with these strategies is that they prevent you from actually testing out your predictions. This makes it very hard for you to ever have a different experience from what you expected, so you continue to expect the worst.

For example, let us imagine you have been invited to a BBQ and your negative prediction is: "I will have a terrible time, no-one will speak to me, I will feel like a total fool." Your usual response may be to either avoid the BBQ altogether, or to attend but to leave as soon as you feel uncomfortable, or to stand in the corner and speak only to one person you already know. This may help you reduce your discomfort in the short term, but it also contributes to the continuation of your negative predictions, and this means continuation of anxieties.



## Testing Our Predictions

What could have been an alternative way to handle the BBQ situation described above? A different approach could be to go to the BBQ, try your best to have a nice time and speak to others, and use the resulting experience as evidence to test your original negative prediction. Think of yourself as a scientist, putting your thoughts under the microscope to examine the evidence for and against your thoughts, instead of assuming that all of your negative predictions are true. Behavioural experiments are a good way for testing these predictions.



## Behavioural Experiment

### What behaviour are you testing?

What behaviour have you engaged in recently that you think was either helpful or unhelpful but you're not sure why? For example, did you try to assertively tell someone you do not appreciate being spoken to a certain way, or did you say something to a person, and they got upset at you? If you want to understand what happened a little better, complete a behaviour experiment such as below.

Be specific in planning the experimental behaviour. What behaviour do you wish to test? How long for? Who will be with you? Where will you be?

### Prediction

Now we will make a prediction to compare later to what actually happened when we test the behaviour. This way we can begin seeing patterns of incorrect predictions and start altering some thought processes.

What outcome do you believe will occur including behaviours feelings and physical reactions of self and others? How likely is it this will happen? (0-100%).

### Alternative

What is an alternative prediction? How likely is it that this will happen? (0-100%)

What safety behaviours will you suspend during this experiment? What helpful coping strategies can you use to manage the situation?



### Outcome

Run the experiment as planned. Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and behavioural reactions and write these down as soon as possible after the experiment has ended.

### Learning

Consider the evidence for and against your original prediction. What did this say about your negative prediction? How did this make you feel?

What have you learned?

Rate how strongly you believe your original and alternative prediction are to occur in the future (0-100%)

Original:

Alternative:



## Deep Breathing

### What is it?

A relaxation technique performed by purposefully taking slow, deep breaths. When practised regularly, deep breathing provides both immediate and long-term relief from stress and anxiety.

### How does it work?

During periods of anxiety, the body triggers a set of symptoms called the stress response. Breathing becomes shallow and rapid, heart rate increases, and muscles become tense. In opposition to the stress response is the relaxation response. Breathing becomes deeper and slower, and the symptoms of anxiety fade away. Deep breathing triggers this response.

### How do I do it?

There are a few different breathing techniques you can try and try each of them at least once or twice, as one size does not fit all and some might find one really comfortable while other people find that technique difficult.

### Basic Breathing Exercise

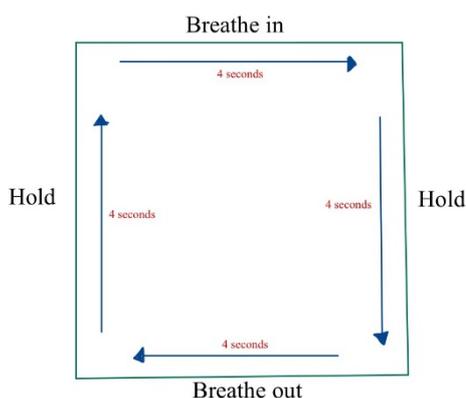
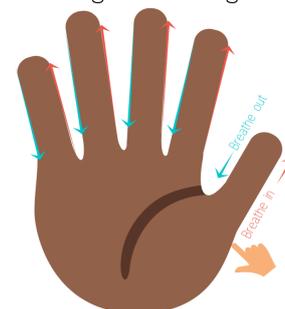
1. Sit in a comfortable position with your feet flat on the ground. Close your eyes or lower them to a comfortable level.
2. Drop your shoulders away from your ears and try to relax them. Allow yourself to breathe naturally.
3. Place your hands on your stomach with the fingertips of each hand lightly touching. Breathe in smoothly through your nose. Notice your belly push your hands gently apart, as you fill your lower lungs with air. There's no need to take an extra deep breath, just a natural breath.
4. Exhale slowly through your mouth. Notice your belly sink back towards your spine as you release your breath. You can imagine that your belly is a balloon. Fill it with air and then watch it deflate.
5. Now take another smooth breath in through your nose for 1, 2, 3, 4, and hold, and out through your mouth for 1, 2, 3, 4, and hold.
6. (Repeat this pattern of slow breathing five more times).
7. Notice the tension in your body draining away.
8. You may choose to continue to breath slowly and smoothly for as long you want. Or, gradually let your breathing return to normal.

### 5 Finger Breathing

Good for children and adults.

You can use this simple tool of running your finger along each finger. Breathe in while running your index finger from your other hand, and out while running your finger back down the other side. Repeat for each finger.

5 Finger Breathing



### Box Breathing

1. Breathe out slowly, releasing all the air from your lungs.
2. Breathe in through your nose as you slowly count to four.
3. Hold your breath for a count of four.
4. Exhale for another count of four.
5. Hold your breath again for a count of four.
6. Repeat for three to four rounds.



# WEEK 6

## Worry (The Future)

### This Week

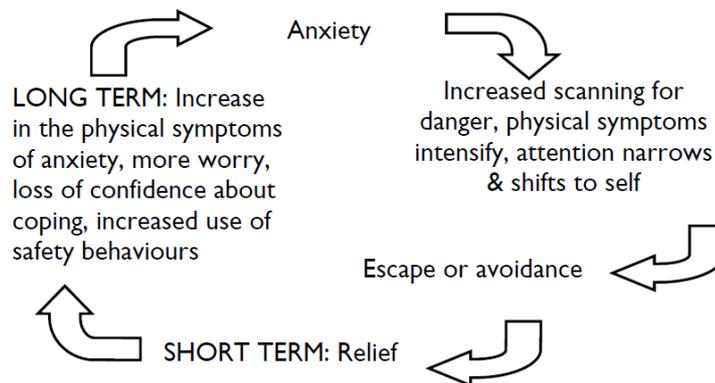
1. Discussing the cycle of anxiety.
2. Understanding how to reverse the cycle.
3. Developing a fear ladder.
4. Beginning a behaviour experiment that we can test.



## The Vicious Cycle of Anxiety

The essence of anxiety is worrying about some *potential* threat and trying to cope with a future event that you think will be negative. You do this by paying more attention to possible signs of potential threat, and looking internally to see whether you will be able to cope with that threat. When you notice your anxious symptoms, you think that you can't cope with the situation, and therefore become more anxious. This is the start of the vicious cycle of anxiety. (A great video is Russ Harris video called Struggle Switch on YouTube).

### The Vicious Cycle of Anxiety



### Reversing the Cycle

The cycle outlined above plays an important role in maintaining anxiety. However, you can turn this cycle around to create a positive cycle that will help you overcome anxiety. One important step in this cycle is gradually confronting feared situations, also known as a graded exposure. This will lead to an improved confidence, helping to reduce your anxiety and allowing you to go into important situations.

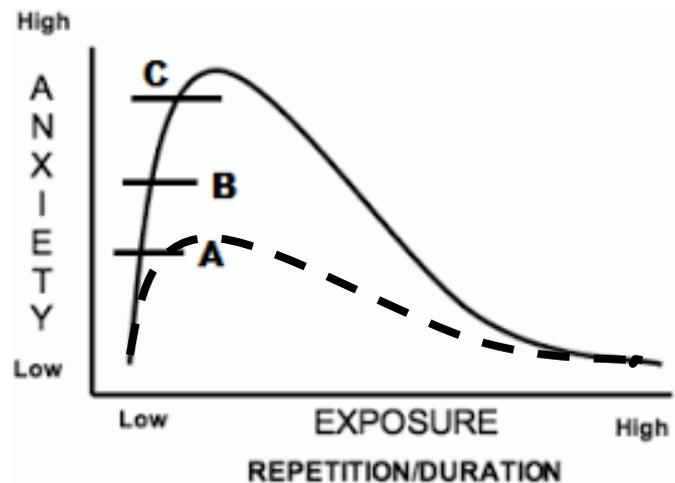
If you go into a stressful experience for the first time, you will tend to stick with it until you get to C on the graph to the right, at which point you withdraw.

Your brain then learns that removing yourself gets rid of anxiety and staying would have led to the anxiety continuing to increase.

The next time you come to the same experience, you will remove yourself at B because your brain says "no, no we have done this before and leaving fixes it".

This happens earlier and earlier each time and when you eventually go to face your anxiety and stick through it, the experience at point A feels like point C, then gets even harder and harder and you struggle to stick it out because you don't know it's not harder than the first time, it just feels like it is.

How we beat this is to find a situation that doesn't get to point C and instead peaks at A (such as the dotted line) due to being less difficult for you. This sets you up to learn that anxiety does decrease, and you can then try the same with the B rating and work up to level C anxiety.







## Behavioural Experiment

### What behaviour are you testing?

Describe below the bottom rung of your fear ladder. Be specific in planning your experimental behaviour. What behaviour do you wish to test? How long for? Who will be with you? Where will you be?

### Prediction

What outcome do you believe will occur including behaviours feelings and physical reactions of self and others? How likely is it this will happen? (0-100%).

What is an alternative prediction? How likely is it that this will happen? (0-100%)

What safety behaviours will you suspend during this experiment? What helpful coping strategies can you use to manage the situation?



### Outcome

Run the experiment as planned. Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and behavioural reactions and write these down as soon as possible after the experiment has ended.

### Learning

Consider the evidence for and against your original prediction. What did this say about your negative prediction? How did this make you feel?

What have you learned?

Rate how strongly you believe your original and alternative prediction are to occur in the future (0-100%)

Original:

Alternative:



# WEEK 7

## Sleep

### **This week**

1. How much sleep do we need?
2. Insomnia, causes, and risk factors.
3. Sleep hygiene
4. Sleep homework diary

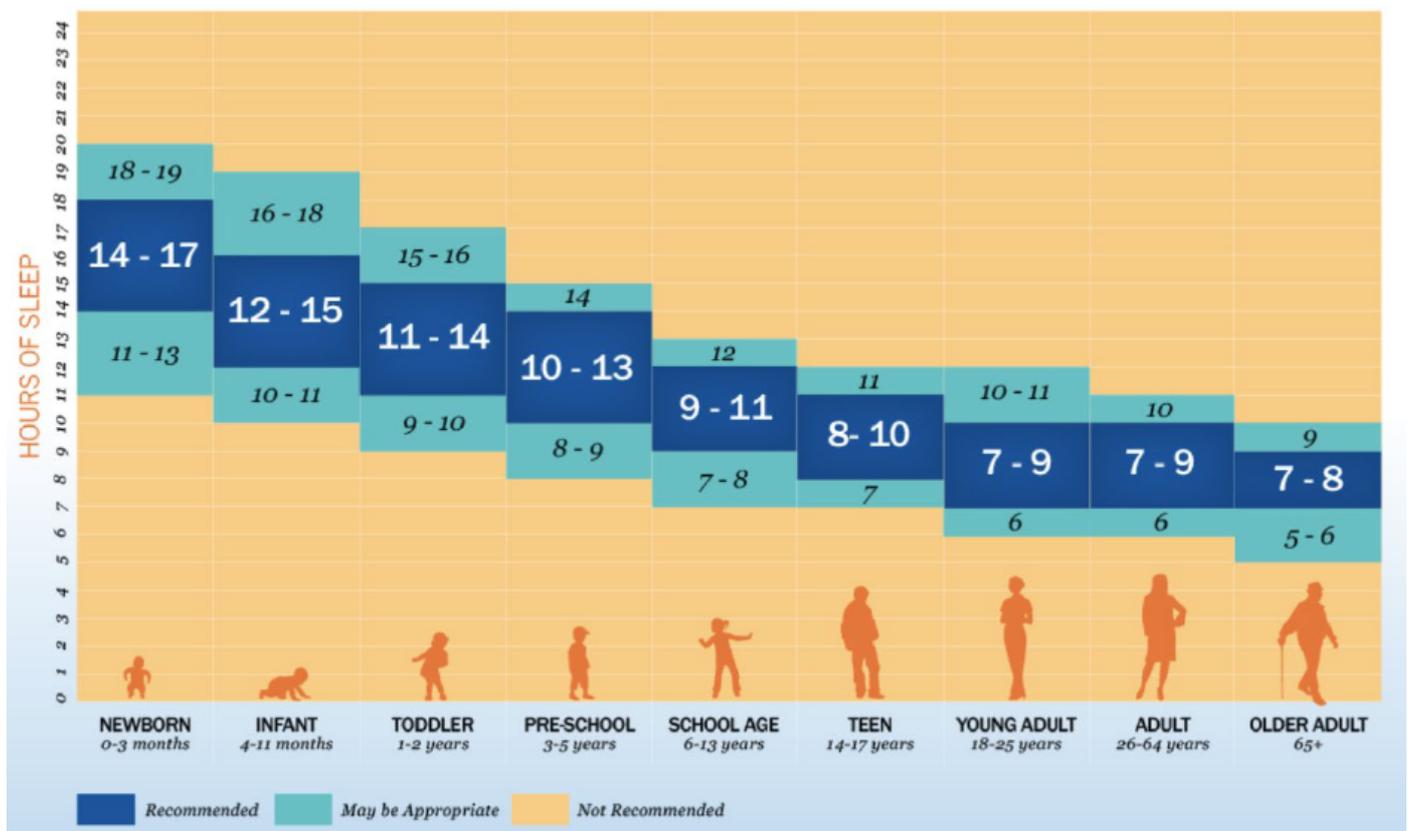


## How much sleep do we need?

As we age, we require less and less sleep. Additionally, as we age, our sleep quality decreases naturally, and this is a normal part of our life and sleep development. You will never wake up at the age of 30 feeling as rested and recuperated as you did at the age of 13. This is expected and more than ok.

Having said all of that, even though you need less as you grow older, you still need a minimum amount. Also, there are some people in the world that do need less sleep than others, however any less than one hour less than the average, is typically a sleep issue and not a natural rhythm.

If you are in the yellow range in the graph below, it is highly likely you have some sleep issues and difficulties.



How much sleep do YOU need? Write below the ranges of what is required.

Recommended: \_\_\_\_\_

May be appropriate: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

How much sleep do you actually get?

Time you fell asleep last night: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours slept last night: \_\_\_\_\_

Time you woke up this morning: \_\_\_\_\_

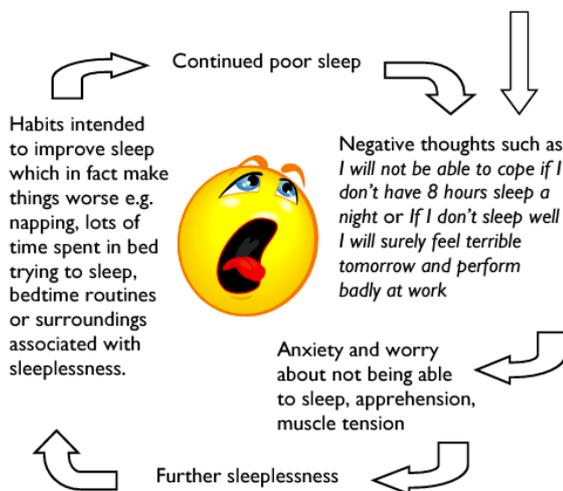


## Insomnia (As per the DSM-5)

- Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early.
- Impairment or distress throughout daytime functioning
- Happens 3 nights per week for at least 3 months.
- Sleep difficulties occur despite adequate sleep opportunity, i.e., not the result of shift-work.
- Is not the result of another sleep-wake disorder such as narcolepsy
- Not attributable substances
- Coexisting mental health disorders do not adequately explain the issues.

### Causes

Research suggests that in many people insomnia likely results from physiological arousal that occurs at unhelpful times, and disrupts normal sleep patterns. Examples of physiological arousal include heightened heart rate, higher body temperature, and increased specific hormones, like cortisol.



Insomnia disorders also often occur alongside mental health disorders and they can become interlinked with each other to create cycles of sleeplessness and fatigue as seen in the figure on the left.

An example of mental illnesses that cause a cycle of poor sleep include anxiety causing racing thoughts once the person lays down and has no distractions, keeping them awake despite being exhausted from the constant fight or flight activation throughout the day. The lack of sleep then activates the emotion centre of the brain and causes increase fight or flight and continues the cycle.

### Risk Factors

- Being a woman or assigned female at birth (40% higher due to both sex and gender differences)  
More info: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/insomnia/insomnia-women>
- Older age
- Lower socioeconomic status (typically higher rates of stress, health issues, and mental illness)
- Medical conditions like diabetes and chronic pain
- Other sleep disorders such as restless legs syndrome and sleep apnea
- Mood disorders including depression and anxiety
- Having an immediate family member with insomnia (both genetic and genetic expression)  
More info: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/insomnia/is-insomnia-genetic>



## Sleep Hygiene

### Good Habits

**Get regular.** One of the best ways to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up around the same time every day, even on weekends and days off! It doesn't matter how late you go to bed and get up if it is the correct number of hours and the same time every day.

**20-minute breaks.** If you haven't been able to get to sleep after about 20 minutes, do something calming or boring out of bed until you feel sleepy, then try again. This reduces the association between being in bed and being awake.

**Bath time.** Having a hot bath or shower 1-2 hours before bedtime can be useful, as it will raise your body temperature, causing you to feel sleepy as your body temperature drops again. Research shows that sleepiness is associated with a drop in body temperature.

**Sleep rituals.** You can develop your own rituals of things to remind your body that it is time to sleep - some people find it useful to do relaxing stretches or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed each night or sit calmly with a cup of caffeine-free tea.

### Lifestyle

**Exercise.** Regular exercise is a good idea to help with good sleep but try not to do strenuous exercise in the 4 hours before bedtime. Morning walks are a great way to start the day feeling refreshed!

**Eat right.** A healthy, balanced diet will help you to sleep well, but timing is important. Some people find that a very empty stomach at bedtime is distracting, so it can be useful to have a light snack, but a heavy meal soon before bed can also interrupt sleep.

**Keep daytime routine the same.** Even if you have a bad night sleep and are tired it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned. Don't avoid activities because you feel tired, as this can reinforce the insomnia.

### Avoid

- **consuming caffeine** and nicotine for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with the ability to fall asleep.
- **alcohol** for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. Many people think that alcohol is relaxing and helps them fall sleep, not knowing it actually interrupts the quality of sleep.
- **using bed** as a place to watch TV, eat, read, work on your laptop, pay bills, and other things, or your body will not learn the connection between bed and sleep.
- **naps** during the day. However, if you can't make it through the day without a nap, make sure it is for less than an hour and before 3pm.
- **clock watching.** Frequently checking the clock during the night can wake you up and reinforces negative thoughts about your sleep.



# Homework: Sleep Diary

Date	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
What time did you get into bed?							
What time did you go to sleep?							
How long did it take you to fall asleep?							
How many times did you wake up? Not counting your final awakening.							
In total, how long did the awakenings last?							
What time was your final awakening?							
What time did you get out of bed for the day?							
How would you rate the quality of your sleep? (poor, fair, good)							
Consumptions of alcohol, caffeine, and/or tobacco							



# WEEK 8

## Health

### This week

- a. What does it mean to be healthy?
- b. Health Anxiety
- c. SEEDS
- d. Behaviour Experiment



## What is health?

The meaning of health changes from person to person, and across cultures and continents. For example, an athlete might consider unhealthy to be if they suffer an injury preventing training. However, a person with a condition, such as diabetes, may consider themselves healthy if they're managing their condition well.

Most definitions of health therefore include a person's state of physical, mental, and social functioning. Most importantly, most definitions of health consider these physical, mental, and social areas of functioning to be on a continuum. Take a few moments to rate each area below, then write in the space what thoughts you had that lead to you marking where you did on the scale.

### Physical

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Needs a lot of work*

*Positive as possible in current situation*

Thoughts on why you marked the scale where you did: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Mental

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Thoughts on why you marked the scale where you did: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Social

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Thoughts on why you marked the scale where you did: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Overall

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Thoughts on why you marked the scale where you did: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Thought Activity

What aspects of your health stand out as being the **most important** to you?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Health Anxiety

While it's important to consider our health, we also need to ensure our thinking is **balanced** and doesn't engage in any of the **unhelpful thinking styles** that we have discussed. Some people go the opposite way with health at times and they experience what is called health anxiety.

Health anxiety refers to the **experience of excessively worrying about threats to your health**. This consequently triggers your anxiety response.

While people with health anxiety worry about any number of health-related issues, some of the more common health related fears include having or developing cancer, Alzheimer's Disease, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, a mental illness such as schizophrenia, a thyroid disorder, or that you may have a heart attack.

Not everyone thinks about specific problems though. **Your fears could be more general**, in that you simply think that something is "not quite right".

Interestingly, note that many of the above examples are things that in many ways we cannot control. Anxiety often comes from a sense of loss of control, and it is helpful to bare this in mind when considering whether our worries are indicators of possible unhelpful thinking styles.

In some cases, the fear we have may even be about the health of a loved one. For example, a parent who has noticed their child is tired frequently may become worried that their child has leukemia, or a person who has noticed that their partner has been coughing frequently may begin to worry that they have lung cancer.

### Health concerns can become a problem when they are:

- excessive i.e.. cause impairment in being able to function appropriately in life
- out of proportion to the realistic likelihood of having an actual and serious medical problem
- persistent despite negative test results and/or reassurance from your health practitioner,
- leading to unhelpful behaviours such as excessive checking, reassurance seeking (e.g., from doctors, family, or friends), or avoidance (e.g., of check-ups, doctors, health related information), and
- causing you significant distress or impair your ability to go about your day-to-day life.

It is helpful to be aware of the signs and symptoms of health anxiety for two reasons 1) **it can be extremely hard to see**, as you have very well meaning intentions and these are very real problems in the world but also 2) it can **prevent you from focusing on the aspects of your health that you CAN change** and that you DO have control over.

## Up next on the CBT group show...

We are going to go through a helpful acronym that you can use to better direct your efforts into areas that will improve your health.



## SEEDS

Seeds is a great acronym to check in with how you are doing regarding your self care, coping, and general health. You can consider each of the areas highlighted below and check in with how you are going with your general self-care and health and what areas to possibly improve on.

# S

## L

## E

## E

## P

- 7-9 hours
- Bedtime and Wake up time stable
- No screen time 2 hours before

# E

## N

## E

## R

## G

## Y

- Feel rested when you get up
- Not needing naps throughout the day
- No general fatigue

# E

## X

## E

## R

## C

## I

## S

## E

- 30 minutes of moving your body
- No exercise right before bed

# D

## I

## E

## T

- Eating 2 fruit and 5 veggies a day
- Eating a variety of foods in each meal
- Mix of protein, carbs, and fats throughout the

# S

## O

## C

## I

## A

## L

- Spending time with a variety of different friends
- Doing a variety of activities with others
- Talking to friends as regularly as often



## Behavioural Experiment

### What behaviour are you testing?

What behaviour have you engaged in recently that you think was either helpful or unhelpful but you're not sure why? For example, did you try to assertively tell someone you do not appreciate being spoken to a certain way, or did you say something to a person, and they got upset at you? If you want to understand what happened a little better, complete a behaviour experiment such as below.

Be specific in planning the experimental behaviour. What behaviour do you wish to test? How long for? Who will be with you? Where will you be?

### Prediction

Now we will make a prediction to compare later to what actually happened when we test the behaviour. This way we can begin seeing patterns of incorrect predictions and start altering some thought processes.

What outcome do you believe will occur including behaviours feelings and physical reactions of self and others? How likely is it this will happen? (0-100%).

### Alternative

What is an alternative prediction? How likely is it that this will happen? (0-100%)

What safety behaviours will you suspend during this experiment? What helpful coping strategies can you use to manage the situation?



### Outcome

Run the experiment as planned. Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and behavioural reactions and write these down as soon as possible after the experiment has ended.

### Learning

Consider the evidence for and against your original prediction. What did this say about your negative prediction? How did this make you feel?

What have you learned?

Rate how strongly you believe your original and alternative prediction are to occur in the future (0-100%)

Original:

Alternative:



# WEEK 9

## Self-Esteem

### This week

1. Learning what is self-esteem.
2. How self-esteem impacts people in general, and you specifically.
3. Activities to raise your self-esteem.
4. Behavioural experiment for one of your raising your self-esteem activities.



## What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem refers to how we view and think about ourselves. Low self-esteem is when you have an overall negative opinion of yourself, you judge, or evaluate yourself negatively, or place a general negative value on yourself as a person.

### Some things that people with low self-esteem might say about themselves include:

- “I get nervous talking to people I don’t know at parties. I’m socially inept and I hate it!”
- “I couldn’t understand a lot of what the instructor was saying today. I must be really stupid.”
- “I’m overweight. I am so fat and ugly.”
- “I’m unimportant.”

## How it Develops

Beliefs about ourselves are learned as a result of the experiences we have had in our lives, especially our early life experiences. Often, the beliefs we have about ourselves are conclusions we arrive at based on what has happened in our lives. This means that at some point in time, it made sense to have those beliefs.

We learn things in different ways. We may learn from direct experiences, the media, observing what other people do, and listening to what people say. This will continue throughout our lives but beliefs about ourselves are often (though not always) developed earlier in life. This means that our experiences in our childhood, family of origin, the society we lived in, schools we went to, and with our peers have influenced our thoughts and beliefs about all sorts of things, including ourselves. If we have arrived at very negative thoughts and beliefs about ourselves, it is likely that we have encountered a variety of negative experiences that might have contributed to this.



### Impact of Low Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem can influence us in a range of ways. A person with low self-esteem probably says a lot of negative things about themselves. They might criticise themselves, their actions, and abilities or joke about themselves in a very negative way. They might put themselves down, doubt themselves, or blame themselves when things go wrong.

Often, they struggle to recognise their positive qualities. When compliments are given to them, they might brush such comments aside or say that "it was all luck" or "it wasn't that big a deal." Instead, they might focus on what they didn't do or the mistakes they made.

People with low self-esteem might expect that things would not turn out well for them. They might often feel sad, depressed, anxious, guilty, ashamed, frustrated, and angry. They might have difficulty speaking up for themselves and their needs, avoid challenges and opportunities, or be overly aggressive in their interactions with others.



### How does your self-esteem impact you?

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Let's look at combatting some of the thoughts that are driven by our low self-esteem by creating a behaviour experiment on small, simple tasks that give us a sense of achievement.



### Self Esteem Activity

One way of combatting low self-esteem is to engage in some activities that boost how you feel about yourself. By engaging in some simple, pleasant, activities that provide you with a sense of achievement, you can improve your mood and sense of achievement. However, because you have low self-esteem, you might not believe or feel that the achievements are that good or accurate in representing your self-esteem, but don't stop after one activity. Keep going and do small things throughout the day and you will find your feeling of purpose improving.

Come up with at least one activity you could test this week to improve your self-esteem and then throughout the week complete the table below with more activities. Use the scale below to rate your sense of self-esteem and accomplishment before and after the activity you decide to do.

Rating

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
None Very High

Activity & Date:

Before: \_\_\_\_\_

After: \_\_\_\_\_



## Behavioural Experiment

### What behaviour are you testing?

What behaviour have you engaged in recently that you think was either helpful or unhelpful but you're not sure why? For example, did you try to assertively tell someone you do not appreciate being spoken to a certain way, or did you say something to a person, and they got upset at you? If you want to understand what happened a little better, complete a behaviour experiment such as below.

Be specific in planning the experimental behaviour. What behaviour do you wish to test? How long for? Who will be with you? Where will you be?

### Prediction

Now we will make a prediction to compare later to what actually happened when we test the behaviour. This way we can begin seeing patterns of incorrect predictions and start altering some thought processes.

What outcome do you believe will occur including behaviours feelings and physical reactions of self and others? How likely is it this will happen? (0-100%).

### Alternative

What is an alternative prediction? How likely is it that this will happen? (0-100%)

What safety behaviours will you trial during this experiment? What helpful coping strategies can you use to manage the situation?



### Outcome

Run the experiment as planned. Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and behavioural reactions and write these down as soon as possible after the experiment has ended.

### Learning

Consider the evidence for and against your original prediction. What did this say about your negative prediction? How did this make you feel?

What have you learned?

Rate how strongly you believe your original and alternative prediction are to occur in the future (0-100%)

Original:

Alternative:



# WEEK 10

## Summary

### Recap Week

1. My core beliefs
2. My common unhelpful thinking styles
3. The difference between sadness/depression and worry/anxiety.
4. My common unhelpful thoughts in relationships
5. Do's and Don'ts of sleep hygiene
6. SEEDS



### Things I Have Learned

What are some core beliefs have you noticed that often come up in your thought diary

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Have there been regular unhelpful thinking styles that you noticed you engage in

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_



What behaviours have provided the outcomes you expected?

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

What behaviours have not provided the outcomes you expected?

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_



# SADNESS

VERSUS

# DEPRESSION



SADNESS



DEPRESSION

A typical human emotion	A medical mental illness
Typically happens in response to an event	Happens because of a life event, genetics or a mix of the two
Allows people to go about their daily activities	Gets in the way of work, relationships and daily life
Goes away with time and healthy lifestyle choices	Goes away with professional treatment, like therapy and/or medication



WORRY



ANXIETY

A typical human response to stress	A medically diagnosable illness
Typically happens when a stressor occurs	Happens because of life events, genetics, or personality traits, or a mix of the three
Allows people to go about their daily life	Gets in the way of work, relationships, or daily life
Improves with time and healthy lifestyle choices	Typically requires treatment through therapy and/or medication

# WORRY

VERSUS

# ANXIETY



## Sleep Hygiene Shortened

### Do's

**Get regular.** Go to bed and get up around the same time every day, even on weekends and days off!

**Sleep rituals.** Develop some rituals of things to remind your body that it is time to sleep.

**Exercise.** Regular exercise preferably in the morning is a good idea to help with good sleep.

**Eat right.** A healthy, balanced diet will help you to sleep well.

**20 minute breaks.** After 20 minutes of trying to sleep, get up and do something calming or boring.

**Bath time.** Having a hot bath or shower 1-2 hours before bedtime can be useful.

**Keep daytime routine the same.** Even if you have a bad night sleep, keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned.



### Don'ts

**Consume too much caffeine** through the day and none 4-6 hours before going to bed.

**Drink alcohol** for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed.

**Use bed** for anything other than sex and sleep, or your body will not connect bed and sleep.

**Nap** during the day.

**Clock watch**, as it reinforces negative thoughts about your sleep.



## SEEDS and Self Esteem Revisited

The final thing we will do in this group is check in with how we are going and reflect if the group has helped us improve our experience in life. We will also revisit our self-esteem activities from Week 8, see which one helped the most and set a goal that over the next week we will engage in that again.

<b>Sleep</b>	Not at all where I want to be _____	Exactly where I want to be
<b>Energy</b>	Not at all where I want to be _____	Exactly where I want to be
<b>Exercise</b>	Not at all where I want to be _____	Exactly where I want to be
<b>Energy</b>	Not at all where I want to be _____	Exactly where I want to be
<b>Diet</b>	Not at all where I want to be _____	Exactly where I want to be
<b>Social</b>	Not at all where I want to be _____	Exactly where I want to be

What could you do to increase one of the above self-care areas a little?

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Self Esteem activity to engage in and boost our feelings of self love:

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...from all the Hunter Psychological Services team! By taking part in this group, we are hopeful that you have been able to stop, take stock, and improve, in some way or another, your life and mental health. You have given us the opportunity to provide more affordable, beneficial, and enjoyable content! Psychologists are not ethically allowed to do anything for their benefit, however that does not mean we have to dislike all of what we do either and knowing that you have been given some chance to improve your life and feel supported in whatever way that works for you, is more meaningful to the clinic than words can truly describe. Every human being is worthy of enjoying the time they have in their head, everyone.

At the finalization of this group, whether online, in person, or self-paced, you will receive an email asking a few questions about the group. We would be extremely appreciative if you could take the time to respond, as your responses allow us to continue to improve the group for future clients. The surveys are completely anonymous, and we take the responses on board, as you know what the client wants the most.