

Health **ANXIETY**

Journey to Wellness

A workbook to unpack your health anxiety & create a new approach

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Common rules & assumptions:

"I must take all symptoms and bodily changes seriously"

"I must be symptom free to be healthy"

"I must report all new bodily sensations to a health professional"

"I must have a diagnosis so I can move forward"

"My doctor must be certain"

"My doctor should be able to explain each of my bodily sensations and changes"

Common
rules

"All discomfort and bodily changes are problematic"

"If my doctor orders a test, then there must be something wrong"

"If I don't keep checking / having tests, I could miss something really important"

"If I don't persist, my Doctor may miss something important"

"If I'm not vigilant, an underlying problem could be getting worse"

Common
assumptions

Common unhelpful thinking styles

CATASTOPHISING

Blowing things out of proportion & assuming the worst case scenario or sinister/negative outcomes

EMOTIONAL REASONING

Assuming that because you feel a certain way, that whatever you are thinking must be true

SHOULD

thinking you 'should' or 'shouldn't' feel something or do something

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

Making predictions about what things mean & what is going to happen.

Lots of 'what if' thinking

ALL OR NOTHING THINKING

Black & white thinking. When you view things in extremes; right or wrong, good or bad



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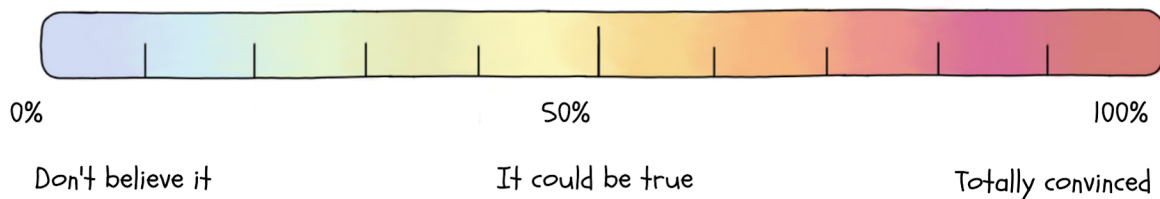
What triggers your health anxiety?

External factors or internal triggers (like somatic sensations etc)

What unhelpful rules/beliefs & assumptions do you hold?

Mark your strongest rule/belief with an *

How strongly do you believe this rule?



What unhelpful thoughts do you have?

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What unhelpful thinking styles are these?

How do you respond next?

Behaviours? Avoidance? Reassurance seeking? Checking? Hypervigilance?

What is the short term result of this behaviour?

What is the long term result of this behaviour?

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Challenge & re-write your unhelpful thoughts/ creating some coping statements:

List some new, more helpful behaviours:

Create your own graded
exposure plan:

List behaviour steps from least to most distressing. Start at the lower end of the scale.



No/low distress

High distress

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Summary of approaches to health anxiety:

DROP THE ROPE

Engaging with your worries & intrusive thoughts is a bit like playing tug-of-war with your worry part. The more you try to placate the worry, the more it pipes up! Often, the most helpful approach is to recognise this and 'drop the rope'; acknowledging your worries & choosing not to engage in the 'game'.

EXTERNALISATION/WORRY PART

Give your 'worry part' or your health anxiety a name. Create an image of it in your mind. When it crops up you can imagine it as an external part of you; have a conversation with it, perhaps tell it that you do not need its advice & that you are safe. Don't engage too much with it or let it get in the drivers seat.

MINDFUL APPROACH - JELLYFISH TECHNIQUE

A mindful acceptance reminds us that thoughts are just thoughts & that we can sit & be with our experience, whatever it is; without judgement, without trying to change anything & without spiralling down the rabbit hole. When health anxiety thoughts crop up; Name them, remind yourself they are Junk thoughts, Allow them to be there & accept their presence, Ground yourself in the present, Ride it out and Carry on with something helpful.

BREATHWORK

Engage your breath to help you switch on your parasympathetic nervous system & feel more calm & safe in your body.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

be mindful not to engage in avoidance, reassurance seeking & hypervigilant behaviours. Instead, pivot to calming, helpful behaviours that keep you grounded in the present.

SOMATIC REGULATION

Use somatic practices to calm & regulate your nervous system & create safety in your body. Practice things like butterfly taps, belly breathing, shaking and swaying, yoga, walks, sitting with your body sensations with loving compassion, polyvagal exercises etc

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Tick the most helpful approaches to health anxiety for you:

☐

'Drop the rope' approach

☐

Breath work

☐

Externalisation/'Worry part'

☐

Behaviour change

☐

Mindful Approach (Jellyfish technique)

☐

Somatic regulation

Coping with health anxiety cheat sheet:

When i notice _____

(emotions or somatic sensations / triggers)

Or thoughts like...

Or these behaviours:

I will remind myself

(helpful thoughts/coping statements)

And then i will

(behaviours & coping strategies)