



# Managing Emotions Programme

## Course 2

Understanding Emotions:  
Learning strategies to  
manage emotions

# Student Workbook

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## About this workbook

This workbook is designed as a reference guide, and to give you something to work on between sessions if you choose to.

Although you may find completing the workbook activities useful, there is no expectation to fill it out, and it will not be seen by anyone else.

Please bring this workbook with you to each session as we may refer to specific pages during the sessions.

## Course 2 Outline

The primary objectives of the course are:

- Session 1 – Understanding Emotions
- Session 2 – Labelling Emotions
- Session 3 – Skills development
- Session 4 – Beginning to Make Positive Change

## Session 1: Understanding Emotions

The most important thing to understand about emotions is that they all have a purpose – they are designed to give us information.

Emotions are usually one word and can be used to finish the sentence: “I feel...” These messages are designed to bring our attention to important things that are happening in our lives; whether it is a big event (e.g. starting a new job), or something smaller and more day-to-day (e.g. being late). It’s common for people to think of emotions as “good” or “bad” or “positive” and “negative”, but that just isn’t the case.

**All emotions have a helpful role to play**, though they can be pleasant or unpleasant. Over thousands of years human beings have evolved to experience a wide range of emotions. Each emotion has a different message. These are designed to make us respond in particular ways. Often, these responses are automatic and subconscious. This is because they want us to react quickly to what is happening in the moment. A typical example is fear - we have evolved to automatically feel fear when we detect danger, and fear usually encourages us to try and escape that situation.

Emotions – even those that feel unpleasant or seem negative – can serve several important functions:

1. Emotions motivate actions that are essential to our survival (e.g., a fight, flight or freeze response).
2. Emotions communicate to those in our environment that we are dealing with stressors and that we need support.
3. Emotions serve a self-validating function (i.e., they tell us that something important in our life is changing or is affected, and help us learn how to deal with recurrent stressors over time).

## What are our emotions trying to tell us?

The table below shows some of the possible messages and causes behind some basic emotions.

<b>Basic Emotion</b>	<b>Message</b>	<b>Possible Cause</b>
<i>Fear</i>	<i>"Danger!"</i>	<i>Speeding car approaching</i>
<i>Anger</i>	<i>"This is wrong/unfair!"</i>	<i>Someone pushing in front of a queue</i>
<i>Sadness</i>	<i>"Things are not good"</i>	<i>Loss of relationships, bereavement</i>
<i>Guilt</i>	<i>"I've done something wrong"</i>	<i>Making a mistake, being blamed for something</i>
<i>Happiness</i>	<i>"Things are good"</i>	<i>Stability in relationships, work and life</i>

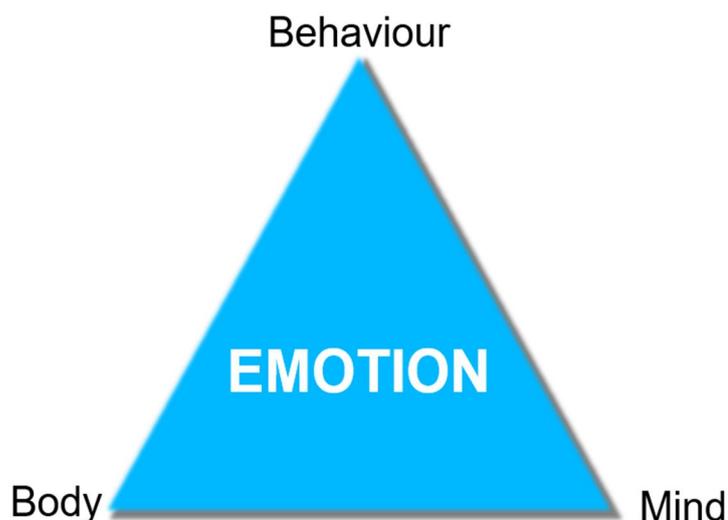
## The Emotion Triangle

Emotion messages get through to us in three different ways –

- Through our body (*physical sensations*)
- Through our minds (thoughts, memories, imagination)
- Through our behaviour (*urges and actions*)

We can call this the **emotion triangle**.

By learning to tune-in to these clues, we can better understand our emotions.



We can learn to tune-in to our emotions better by focusing on these three areas.

Think of it as a bit like being a detective – looking for clues in these three areas to figure out what we are feeling.

It isn't always easy to learn how to tune-in and identify the specific emotion(s) we are feeling, but it is something we can learn to do and get better at with practice.

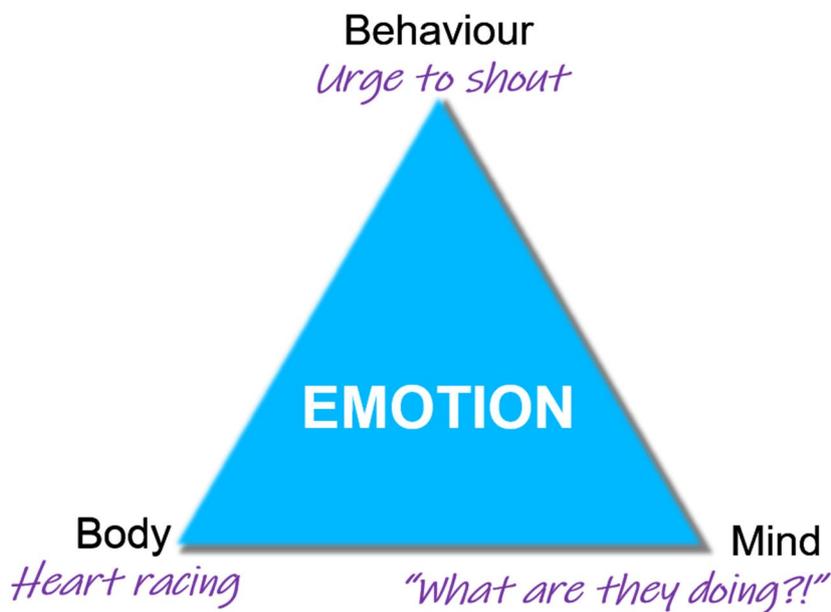
## The Emotion Triangle - Example

Different emotions influence our body, mind and behaviour in specific ways.

For example, when we feel **angry** at someone:

- Our thoughts may get stuck on what the person is doing (*mind*)
- We feel our heart rate increase (*body*)
- We feel an urge to confront the situation (*behaviour*)

So, our emotion triangle would look like this:





**Workbook Activity: Fill in this blank Emotion Triangle**

**Behaviour:**

Behaviour

**EMOTION**

Body

Mind

**Body:**

**Mind:**



**Workbook Activity: Fill in this table for yourself**

<b>Basic Emotion</b>	<b>Mind</b>	<b>Body</b>	<b>Behaviour</b>
<i>Fear</i>			
<i>Anger</i>			
<i>Sadness</i>			
<i>Guilt</i>			
<i>Happiness</i>			
<i>Contentment</i>			

## Session 2: Labelling Emotions

Learning to become more aware of our emotions is important. After all, they are trying to give us messages to help us survive or get by in life.

If we don't recognise and respond to our emotions, they can get more intense over time.

This is because the emotion is still trying to get the right message through to us.

Emotional awareness can go wrong when:

- We ignore our emotions when they happen
- We try to bury them (suppression)
- We mis-identify them (e.g. we think we are angry when really, we are frightened)

One big part of emotional awareness is being able to name your emotions and tell them apart.

This is a skill called labelling and it is an important first step in managing your emotions effectively.

Remember that the emotion is trying to get your attention – if you don't listen, it will keep trying!

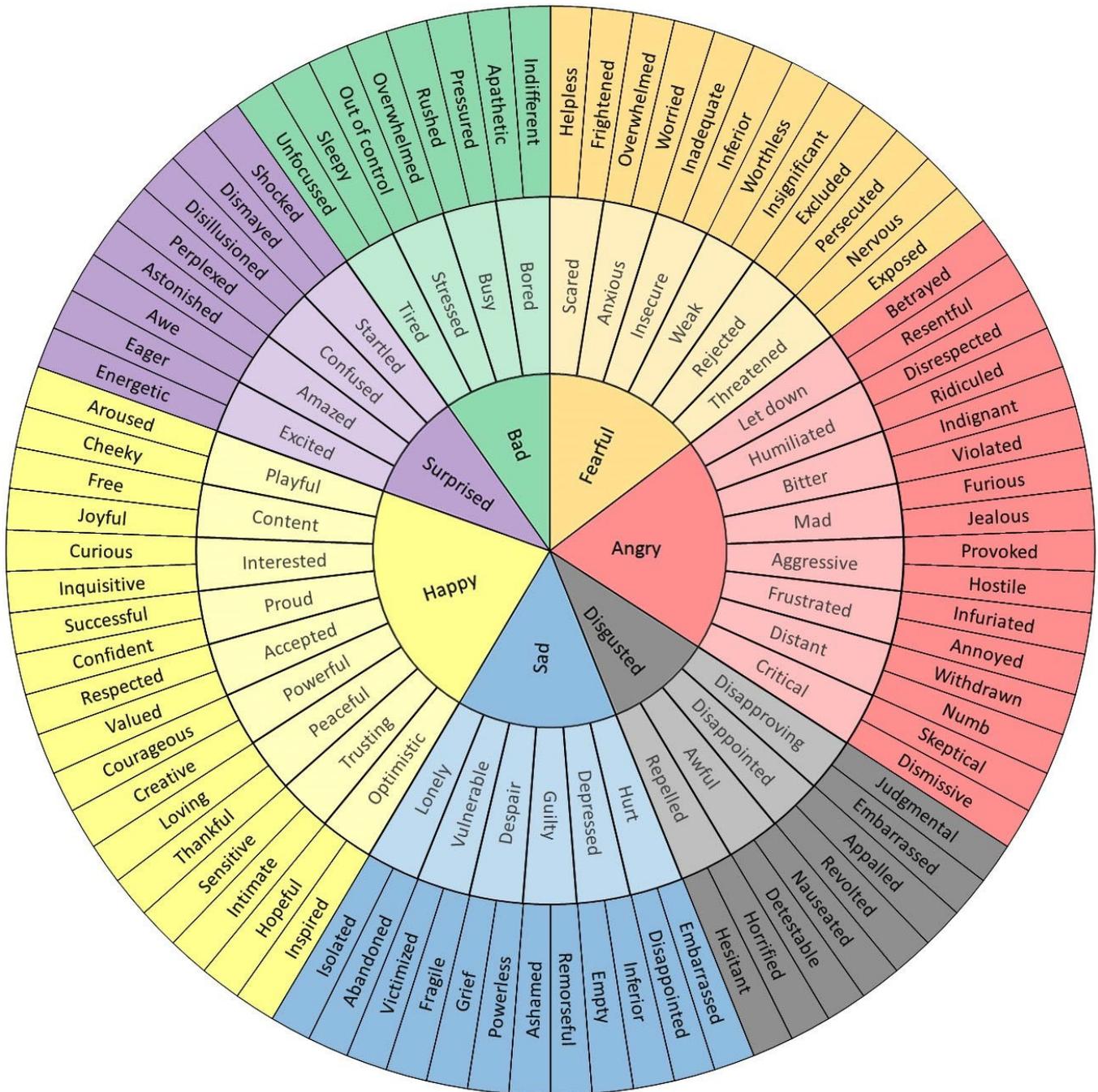


## Today I feel...

Use these different emotion words, or the emotions wheel on the next page, to help you to recognise different emotions so you can express how you are feeling and learn different 'feeling' words.

Brave	Stubborn	Confused
Confused	Shy	Angry
Curious	Sad	Cheerful
Proud	Loving	Surprised
Frustrated	Relieved	Bored
Embarrassed	Jealous	Disappointed
Worried	Lonely	Excited
Uncomfortable	Friendly	Generous
Happy	Scared	Impatient
Interested	Overwhelmed	Annoyed
Calm	Agitated	Joyful

## The Emotions Wheel



## Emotional Intensity

These are some of the most common human emotions

Add some emotion words from mild to intense that describe these feelings:

	Fear	Anger	Sad	Happy
Mild				
Medium				
Intense				

## Difficulties with labelling emotions

It's a fact of life that we will experience a range of negative reactions and feelings. Having a feeling – even an intense or unpleasant one – is never wrong. It just happens. What is important is how we react, and the impact our behaviours and actions have on ourselves or others.

If we demonstrate inappropriate or harmful responses, we are likely to suffer negative consequences. It is important to take responsibility for our reactions and related behaviours in situations that evoke a strong emotional reaction.

**Be aware of your feelings:** Recognise which emotions you are feeling and why. For example, while one person may feel hurt after being criticised, another person may feel stimulated to improve his or her behaviour.

**Label your feelings:** When discussing your reactions, describe them as accurately as you can and specify their intensity, to avoid any misunderstanding. If you stay too general and, for example, say only “I'm angry”, some people may think you are “extremely angry” while others believe you are only a “little irritated”. If you experience mixed feelings, label and explain them all.

**Example 1:** “I feel very distracted when I'm interrupted and it's making me a little frustrated.”

**Verbally convey responsibility:** Acknowledge the fact that it is YOUR feeling that you are experiencing. Use I-messages and verbally take responsibility for your own feelings (e.g., “*I feel frustrated when you...*”), rather than attacking and accusing the other person with You-messages (e.g., “*You made me feel...*”).

**Apologise (if appropriate):** Sometimes we can't help but express our feelings in a harmful manner. You can't take back what you said or did, but you can apologise afterward and try to clarify why you acted that way.

**Example 1:** “I'm sorry that I yelled at you before. My reaction was not about you and was really inappropriate. I'll work on this to ensure that it doesn't happen again”

Taking responsibility for our feelings and reactions can help prevent us from making statements that get us into trouble or cause unnecessary conflict. If we take responsibility for our feelings even when bothered by another person's behaviour, the other person may be less likely to become defensive and more likely to listen to what we say and understand what we are asking for.

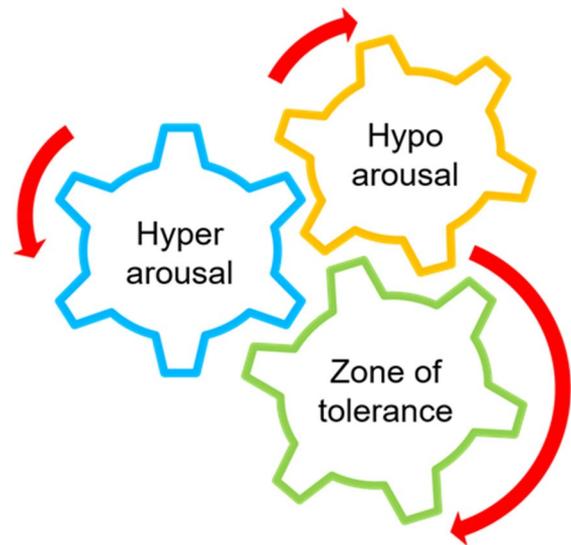
## Session 3 – Skills Development

A useful way to think about how we experience and manage our emotions is through the Zone of Tolerance (sometimes called the window of tolerance).

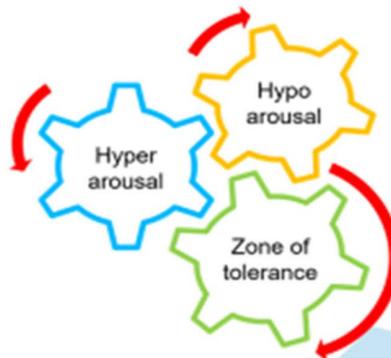
The **Zone of Tolerance** is a simple idea that says we all have a comfort zone where we can manage our emotions productively, based on how intense the emotion is.

When we can identify how intense our emotions are, we can then choose a strategy that might bring our emotions back into the Window of Tolerance.

We will learn some strategies on the following pages.



- Breathing can become faster and experience hyperventilation
- "One-track mind"
- Chronic Pain, often muscular-skeletal pain
- Body is physically ready to FIGHT or FLEE
- Emotions feel like they are on hyper-drive
- Heart rate high \* blood pressure
- High muscle tension
- Impulsivity
- Sensory overload common



- Feeling zoned out, spacey, numb, 'brain fog'
- Body slows down, low blood pressure, slower or shallow breathing
- Difficulties with decision making and focus
- Feeling disconnected from your body and/or surroundings
- Part of the 'FREEZE' response
- Triggered by feelings of overwhelm, terror, helplessness & loss of control

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Able to adapt and change with the situation</li> <li>▪ Able to focus and plan</li> <li>▪ Able to recognize emotions and use rational thinking at the same time</li> <li>▪ Emotions can shift in intensity but never reach a point where we become overwhelmed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present and able to interact with others</li> <li>▪ Stable blood pressure, easy even breathing</li> <li>▪ Stable resting heart rate and will raise and lower with exercise</li> <li>▪ Relaxed muscles</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## Distancing

A skill used to create temporary distance from intense thoughts and feelings. It is our ability to take a step back.



### Workbook Activity: Distancing

*Use the space below to list some distancing activities personal to you.*



## Distraction

Distraction allows us to be able to focus our mind on something else until our emotional intensity decreases.



### Workbook Activity: Distraction

*Use the space below to list some distracting activities personal to you.*



## Taking Opposite Action

Use opposite action when your emotions do not fit the facts or when acting on your emotions is not effective or helpful.

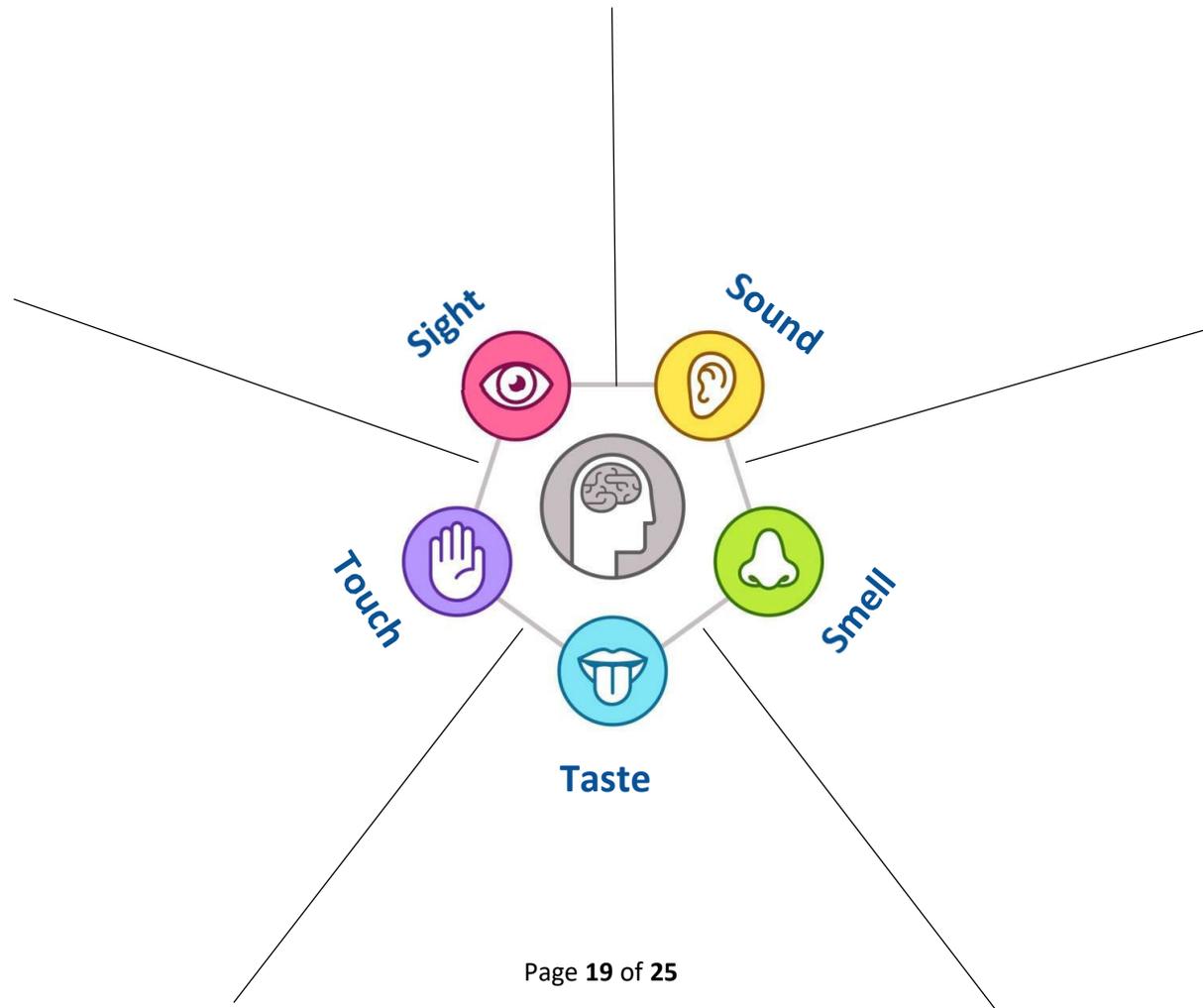
When you find yourself experiencing an unpleasant emotion, reacting with the opposite action (e.g. speaking softly instead of shouting) can be incredibly useful in helping to regulate your emotions, especially if the emotion feels disproportionate to the situation. The idea is not to invalidate the reality of that emotional experience, but instead to alter the emotion to help make a desirable outcome more likely.

Taking Opposite Action, step by step	
Step 1	<b>IDENTIFY AND NAME</b> the emotion you want to change
Step 2	<b>CHECK THE FACTS</b> to see if your emotion is proportionate to the situation. Also check if the duration and intensity is supported by the facts. (For example 'irritation' fits when a car cuts in front, 'road rage' does not.)
Step 3	<b>IDENTIFY AND OBSERVE</b> your action urges
Step 4	<b>ASK:</b> Will expressing or acting on this emotion be effective in this situation?
Step 5	<b>IDENTIFY OPPOSITE/NEUTRAL ACTIONS</b>
Step 6	<b>ACT OPPOSITE/NEUTRAL</b> to your action urges
Step 7	<b>REPEAT ACTING OPPOSITE/NEUTRAL</b> until your emotion changes



**Workbook Activity: Grounding**

*Grounding techniques can help you when you drift off because you are feeling intense emotions. This technique helps you cope by changing your focus to the immediate moment.*



## Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

Automatic negative thoughts may come into our mind when we are feeling intense emotions. Challenging them, over time, can lessen their impact and reduce emotional intensity. Thoughts are not facts!



### Workbook Activity: Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

*Use the space below to write down how you might challenge unhelpful thoughts.*

Unhelpful Thought	Challenge

## Self-Care

Self-care includes activities used to improve or maintain mental and physical well-being. Types of self-care include **physical** (e.g. going for a walk, eating a healthy meal) and **emotional** (e.g. writing down your feelings or talking with a friend). Self-care activities can help soothe us in times of emotional distress and might be different for everyone.



### Workbook Activity: Self-Care Activities

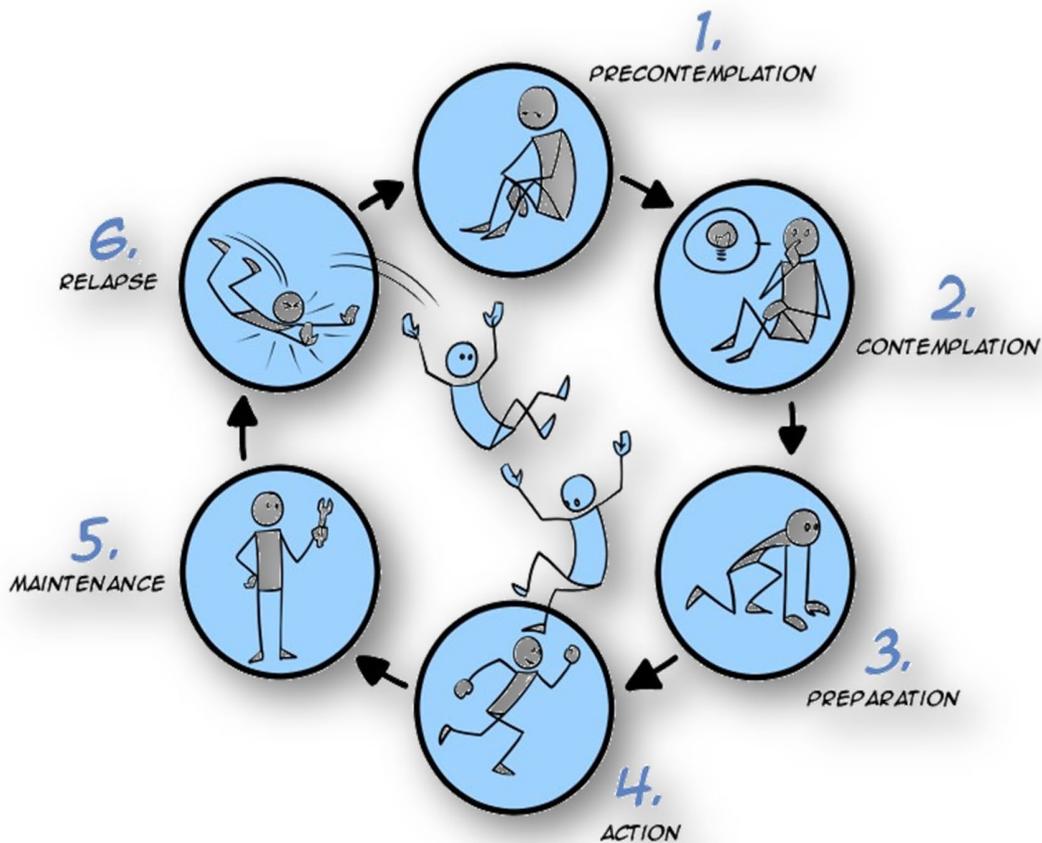
*Use the space below to list some self-care activities personal to you.*

## Session 4 – Beginning to make positive change

Today we are going to talk about making positive changes. The aim of this session is to think about what can get in the way of making changes and how we can problem solve around these to help us move forward in our recovery.

### What affects our motivation to change?

#### Stages of Change Model



*(taken from <https://blog.braive.com/cycle-of-change-3188d0228ad5>)*

## Pros and Cons of a Behaviour

This skill is a way of looking at your responses and behaviours and considering the advantages and disadvantages of this. This can apply to a range of different behaviours, and it can then help you to decide whether this behaviour is helpful to you, or whether there may be an alternative response or behaviour.

<b>Step 1</b>	Identify which behaviour it is that you would like to change <i>e.g. staying in bed all day.</i>
<b>Step 2</b>	Consider, what are the advantages of this behaviour, <i>e.g. what will I gain? how will this help me?</i>
<b>Step 3</b>	Consider, what are the disadvantages of this behaviour, <i>e.g. are there any negatives about these behaviours?</i> <i>Will I lose anything? Will I regret it later?</i>
<b>Step 4</b>	Weigh up the advantages and disadvantages and then choose, would this be a helpful behaviour to engage in?
<b>Step 5</b>	If yes - carry it out
<b>Step 6</b>	If no - consider an alternative behaviour
<b>Step 7</b>	As above, consider the advantages and disadvantages of an alternative behaviour

When making these lists look at both short term positive and negative consequences and more long term positive and negative consequences.



**Workbook Activity: Pros and cons of a behaviour**

Behaviour: \_

<p><b>PROS</b></p> <p>Advantages for me of doing this</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. _____</li><li>2. _____</li><li>3. _____</li><li>4. _____</li><li>5. _____</li></ol>	<p><b>CONS</b></p> <p>Disadvantages for me of doing this</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. _____</li><li>2. _____</li><li>3. _____</li><li>4. _____</li><li>5. _____</li></ol>
<p>Based on the above, would this behaviour be helpful to me?</p> <p><b>Yes</b> – carry it out <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>No</b> – consider an alternative behaviour <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Alternative Behaviour: _____</p>	
<p><b>PROS</b></p> <p>of doing the alternative behaviour</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. _____</li><li>2. _____</li><li>3. _____</li><li>4. _____</li><li>5. _____</li></ol>	<p><b>CONS</b></p> <p>of doing this alternative behaviour</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. _____</li><li>2. _____</li><li>3. _____</li><li>4. _____</li><li>5. _____</li></ol>

## Helpful contacts

If you need mental health support, you can contact any of the services below without needing a referral from your GP.

### **Talking Therapies**

 0300 365 2000  <https://talkingtherapies.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/>

### **Common Point of Entry (CPE)**

 0300 365 2000 (Press option 4)

### **Crisis Team**

 0300 365 9999

### **Samaritans**

 116 123  [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)