A guide for managing worries

Dealing with worry

We all worry from time to time. Worries are normal and they are more common than we realise. However, they can feel overwhelming because when we are worried we start to develop feelings of anxiety and being overwhelmed.

Positive aspects of worry

You might be surprised to know but there are actually positive aspects of worry that don't often get spoken about. Worry is a good thing when it motivates us to deal with situations that we go through.

That worry can drive us to search for solutions to difficult situations that we go through. Worry only becomes a problem if we do not manage it in a healthy way. A fight or flight response is trigged when we worry. The fight or flight response is a normal response as part of the human system that is there to warn us of danger or to help us prepare for situations. A classic example of fight/flight in action is when we are preparing for exams or interviews. The anxiety is there to motivate us to prepare well.

Worry only becomes a problem if the anxiety is not proportionate to the danger or if we don't manage the worry in a healthy way.

If we didn't have any worries that would be a problem because we would be so care free.

The positive aspects of worry are best summed up as follows:

- It motivates us to deal with problems
- It helps us find solutions
- It helps protect us and our loved ones from danger

Negative aspects of worry

Worry becomes a problem if we don't manage it in a healthy way and the reason it becomes a problem is because it can start to affect our emotions negatively. It can also start to cause anxiety sensations in our body and that's because the mind and the body are connected. Worry becomes a problem when we start to see it as a bad thing. It also becomes a problem when we worry about worrying. Negative aspects of worry are summed up as follows:

- It can occupy and overwhelm our minds
- It can make us think that something is wrong with us
- It can take away our focus on looking after ourselves
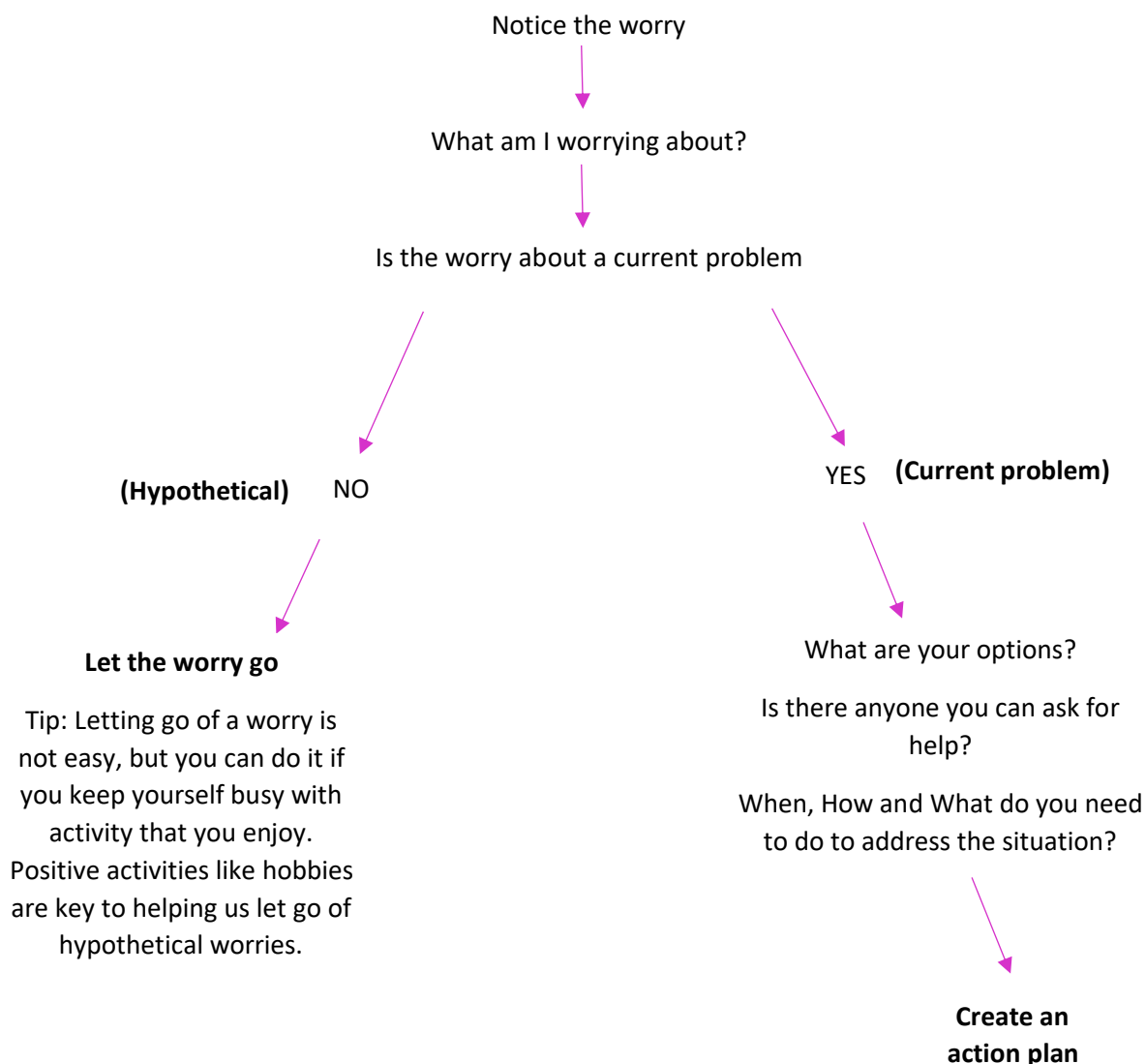
Learning to manage worry

We can learn how to manage our worries in a healthy way using worry management strategies. When it comes to managing worries it's important for us to identify the type of worries we are experiencing. We experience two different types of worry which are described as being either practical or hypothetical.

Practical worries are typically anxiety thoughts about everyday issues that we deal with. A typical example of practical worries would be about finances or work. They are practical worries because we have to deal with them in a practical way and often this involves problem solving to find solutions.

Hypothetical worries are those which are not practical. They are usually worries that we cannot problem solve or find solutions to. We usually worry in a hypothetical way when we are anxious about things that haven't happened. An example of this might be to worry that you won't cope with settling into a new place.

Step 1: Is your problem hypothetical or practical?

Worry Tree

Notice the worry

↓

What am I worrying about?

↓

Is the worry about a current problem

(Hypothetical) NO

YES **(Current problem)**

Let the worry go

Tip: Letting go of a worry is not easy, but you can do it if you keep yourself busy with activity that you enjoy. Positive activities like hobbies are key to helping us let go of hypothetical worries.

What are your options?

Is there anyone you can ask for help?

When, How and What do you need to do to address the situation?

↓

Create an action plan

Use the table below to write down the type of worry that you are experiencing:

Practical or Hypothetical?		
Situation	Worry	Hypothetical or Practical?
Example 1: I am moving to a new place next month.	I won't know anyone and will feel out of place.	Hypothetical (let it go)
Example 2: I have a credit card bill due.	I'm worried I can't pay my bill.	Practical (problem solve)

Step 2: Practical Problem (What are your solutions?)

Use this table to come up with solutions to your problem.

	Solution	Advantages	Disadvantages
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Step 3: What's your action plan

Did you weigh up the solutions by looking at the advantages and disadvantages?

Were you able to identify the best solution?

Now it's time to act.

Use the table below to put together your action plan of how you will implement the solution.

When do you plan to do it? It helps to set yourself a date.	**Where** do you plan to do it?	**How** do you plan to do it?	**Who** can help you do it?