

Be kind to your mind



The Phoenix Centre, an arm of Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania, wishes to acknowledge the generosity of Psychology Tools: 'Living with worry and anxiety amidst global uncertainty' for sharing their valuable resource.

This project was supported by the Crown through the Department of Health.

Supported by Primary Health Tasmania under the Australian Government's Primary Health Networks Program.

Supported by the Australian Government Department of Health.



Living with worry and anxiety

Our world is forever changing, and sometimes those changes make us worry more than usual. We can worry about how those changes will affect us, and those we love.

Worry and anxiety are common problems even when things are going well – but sometimes they can take over our wellbeing and become too much.

This booklet will explore ‘worry’ and how we can manage it. Self-help suggestions and exercises are included for you to try when you feel that your worry is overwhelming.

There are also the numbers and contact details of organisations and support networks, should you need them.

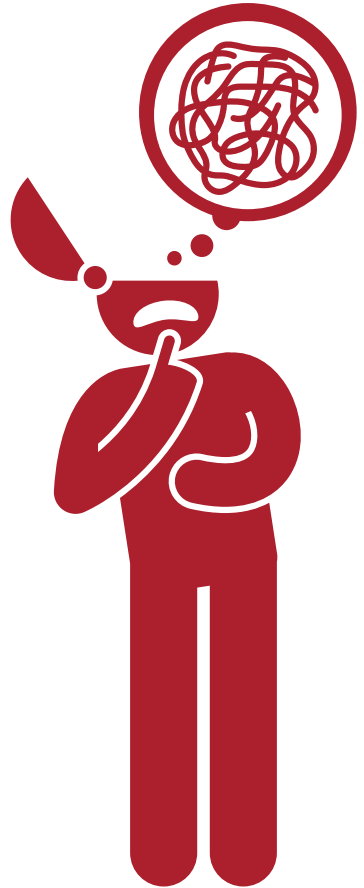


What is worry?

Human beings have the amazing ability to think about future events. 'Thinking ahead' means that we can anticipate problems, and gives us the opportunity to plan solutions. When it helps us to achieve our goals, 'thinking ahead' can be helpful.

For example, hand washing and physical distancing are helpful things that we can decide to do in order to prevent the spread of viruses.

However, worrying is a way of 'thinking ahead' that often leaves us feeling anxious or apprehensive. When we worry excessively, we often think about the worst thing that can happen and feel that we won't be able to cope.

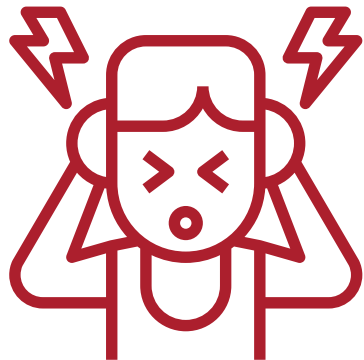


What does worry feel like?

Sometimes worry can feel uncontrollable, or like it is taking over all other thoughts. Worry such as this isn't just in our heads. When it becomes excessive we feel it as anxiety in our bodies too.

Physical symptoms of worry and anxiety include:

- Muscle tension or aches and pains
- Restlessness and unable to relax
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Often feeling very tired



What triggers worry and anxiety?

Anything can be a trigger for worry. Even when things go right, you might manage to think "but what if something goes wrong?"

There are particular situations where worry becomes even more common, though. Things that make us worry more are:

New – We haven't been in this situation before, so we don't have any experience to relate to, so may be unsure what to do.

Unpredictable – We're not sure how things will turn out.

Confusing – Not everyone is going to understand things the same way – your opinion might differ to other people's.

Different types of worry

Worry can be helpful or unhelpful, and some people find it helpful to think about worries as either 'real problems' or 'hypothetical problems'.

Real Problem worries - Real problem worries are about actual problems affecting you right now and which you can act on now. For example, with viruses like COVID-19, there are a lot of things you can do to prevent the chances of you catching the virus, such as hand-washing and keeping some physical distance from others.

Hypothetical worries - Hypothetical worries are about things that do not currently exist, but which might happen in the future. These worries are often about the worst things that could possibly happen, such as "What if I die?", "What if everyone I know dies?"



When does worry become a problem?

Everyone worries sometimes, and some worrying can help us to think ahead and plan what to do. We say that worry becomes a problem when it stops you from living the life you want to live, or if it leaves you feeling overly tired or without hope.



Helps you to get what you want

Helps you to solve problems in your life

Leaves you feeling without hope,
upset, or overly tired

Gets in the way of living the life you
want to lead

Be kind to your mind

Everyone copes with change and difficulties differently. How have you managed when things have been difficult in the past?



Can you share some of these coping strategies with friends and family?

What can I do about worry?

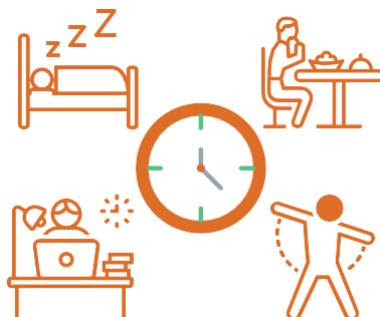
In this section of your booklet, we are going to concentrate on some information and exercises that will help you manage your wellbeing. These will help you to:

Maintain balance in your life – Some people think that well-being comes from living a life with a balance of activities that give you feelings of pleasure, achievement, and closeness (being connected with others).

An imbalance of pleasure, achievement, and closeness can affect our mood. For example, if you spend most of your time working with no time for pleasure or socialising, then you may start to feel low and isolated. And if you spend most of your time relaxing for pleasure and not doing other things that are important to you then this can also impact your mood.

At the end of each day could you check in with yourself and reflect on 'what did I do today that gave me a sense of achievement? Pleasure? Closeness with others?' Did I get a good balance, or what can I do differently tomorrow?

It helps to have some certainty in uncertain times. If possible, try to stick to a daily routine –waking up, working, eating, exercising, and taking breaks at similar times each day.





Pleasure – Plan to do some activities each day that are pleasurable and make you feel joyful. For example, reading a good book or magazine, watching a comedy, dancing or singing to your favourite songs, taking a relaxing bath, or eating your favourite food.



Achievement – We feel good when we have achieved or accomplished something, so it's helpful to include activities each day that give you a sense of achievement. For example, doing some housework, decorating, gardening, a work task, cooking a new recipe, completing an exercise routine, or completing 'life admin' such as paying a bill.



Connection – Remember that we're social animals – we need connections to thrive and flourish. Try to do at least some activities that are social and involve other people. In times like these you might have to find some creative ways to do social things at a distance. For example, by keeping in touch online or by phone.

Be kind to your mind

Are there physically distanced ways you can check on your neighbour and those who are alone?



You will make two people feel happy once you do.

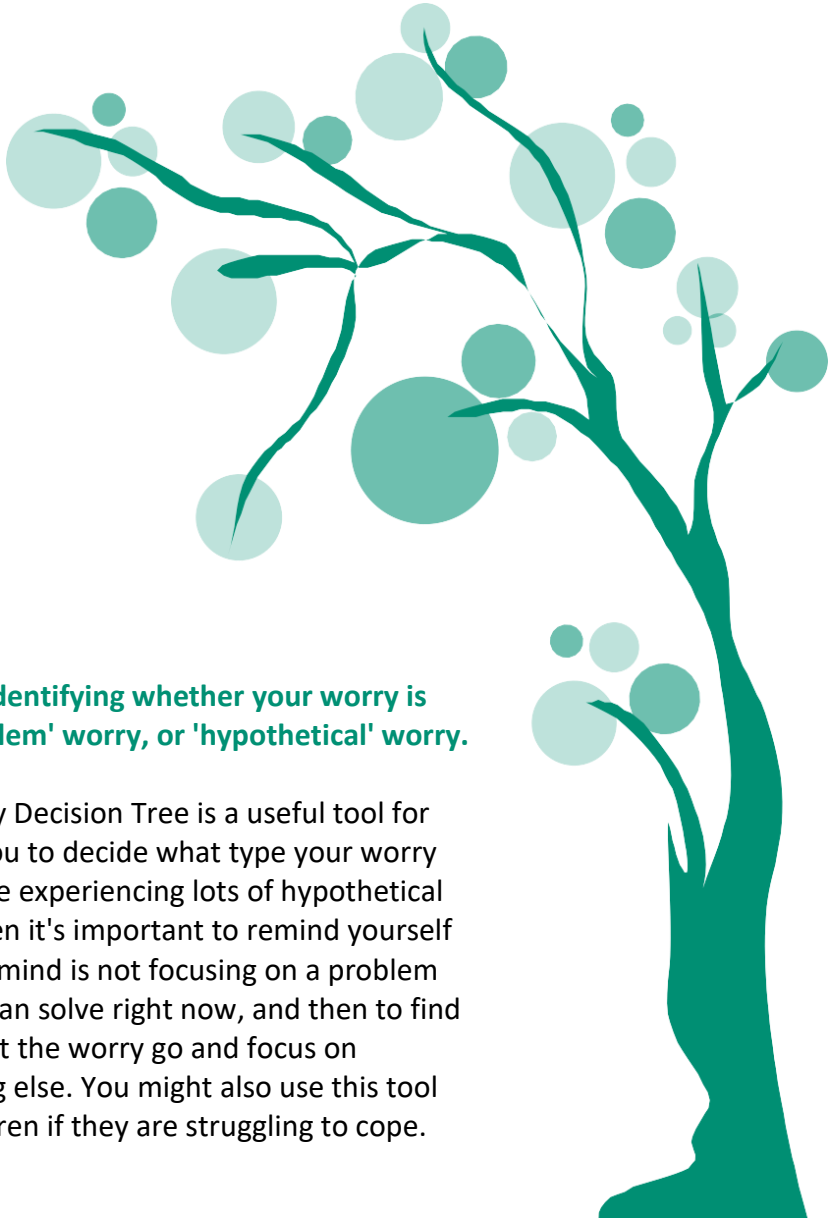
Be kind to your mind

Remember - your friends
are in your pocket....
You just have to call them

Friends and
family feel closer
when you talk



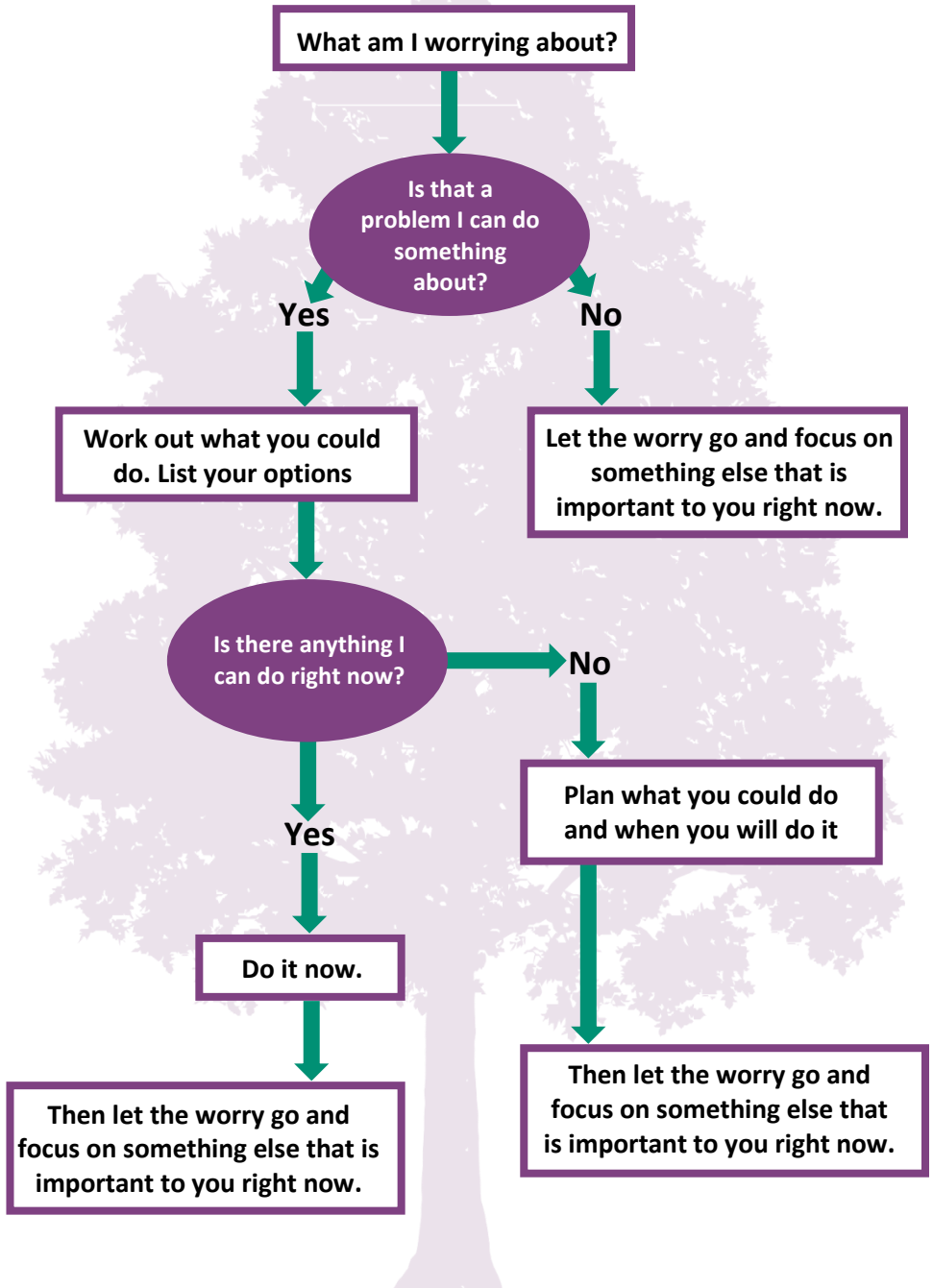
Worry Tree



Practice identifying whether your worry is 'real problem' worry, or 'hypothetical' worry.

The Worry Decision Tree is a useful tool for helping you to decide what type your worry is. If you're experiencing lots of hypothetical worry, then it's important to remind yourself that your mind is not focusing on a problem that you can solve right now, and then to find ways to let the worry go and focus on something else. You might also use this tool with children if they are struggling to cope.

Use this decision tree to help you notice 'real problem' vs. 'hypothetical worry'



Compassion

Speak to yourself with compassion. Worry can come from a place of concern - we worry about others when we care for them.

Talk to yourself gently. Imagine what your best friend would say to you.

Reassure yourself that your worry comes about because you care for others.

Practice responding to your anxious or worrying thoughts with kindness and compassion.



Be kind to your mind



Use the power of kindness to make you and others feel stronger and happier.

Can you send someone a card, make them some food, share a favourite book or song?



Practicing compassion and kindness can lead to a stronger immune system, greater happiness and lower levels of stress and depression.

Be kind to your mind

It is normal for times of high stress and uncertainty to trigger memories of stressful times in your past. If you find this happening a lot, try to bring your mind back to the present by noticing:



5 things you can see

4 things you can hear



3 things you can touch

2 things you can smell



And take 1 deep breath

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about concentrating on the present moment, instead of the past or the future. Learning and practicing mindfulness can help us let go of worries and bring ourselves back to the present moment.



Focus on the gentle movement of your breath, or what you can hear or see around you right now.

Self-care check in

It can be helpful to regularly check in with how we are doing by recognising any changes in our lives. Some areas to check include:



Feelings: Have you noticed any changes in how you are feeling lately? Are you sad more often, or finding everyday tasks (cooking, washing up, getting dressed etc) more difficult than they used to be?



Body: Have you noticed any changes in your body? A racing heart; tight/sore shoulders; difficulty breathing?



Sleep: Have there been changes in your sleep? Do you find it hard to get to sleep, or wake during the night and unable to go back to sleep? Or are you sleeping



Worries: Have you been focusing on 'hypothetical worries', the ones that you have no control over? Are you always worrying about the worst things that can happen?



Behaviour: Has your behaviour changed lately? Are you taking more risks than usual; getting angry with people more often; using alcohol/drugs or more/less food to help you cope?

Self-care check in

If you notice any changes in these things that are affecting your wellbeing, make a plan for what you will do about that. Your plan might include:

Talking to someone close to you, or a doctor or counsellor, about these changes

Practicing some of the exercises in this booklet e.g. mindfulness, compassion, gratitude etc.

Try to get some exercise and fresh air each day

Remember to have a balance of pleasure, achievement and connection in your days.

Be kind to your mind

Today have you:



Exercised?



Laughed?



Eaten something
healthy?



Connected with
someone outside
of the household?

Remember, we are
all in this together.



Be kind to your mind

Practicing gratitude can have a positive impact on your mental health, particularly during time of high stress or change.



Either by yourself, or with a friend or family member, try to name 3 things every day that you are grateful for in your life.

Further Support



If any of the changes you have noticed are starting to affect you, and you've tried all the suggestions, tips and strategies in this booklet, and still feel 'not right', call or contact any of the following:

Lifeline (24 hours a day, every day)

13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service (24 hours a day, every day)

1300 659 467

The Phoenix Centre (9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Hobart 03 6221 0999 | Launceston 03 6724 2820

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal black ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Contact Us

Glenorchy Office

Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania
KGV Sports and Community Centre,
Level 2, 1A Anfield Street, Glenorchy
Phone: 03 6221 0999

reception@mrctas.org.au

www.mrctas.org.au

www.facebook.com/mrctasmania

Launceston Office

Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania
27 Paterson Street, Launceston
Phone: 03 6724 2820

