

Workshops:

1. Behaviour

2. Emotions

3. Anxiety

4. Assertiveness

5. Worrying

6. Thinking 1

7. Thinking 2

Worrying



“When I really worry about something, I don’t just fool around. I even have to go to the bathroom when I worry about something. Only, I don’t go. I’m too worried to go. I don’t want to interrupt my worrying to go”

[from *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger]





**What links cattle
and worrying?**

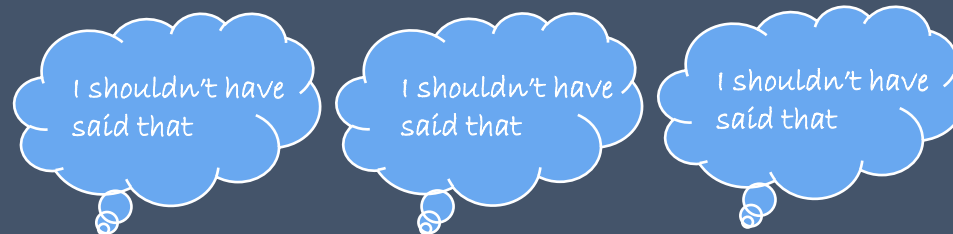


Rumination

Animals like cattle and sheep are known as “ruminants” because they have to chew their food over and over again in order to extract the goodness.



The physical process of rumination has a psychological counterpart, characterised by dwelling repeatedly on particular thoughts.



This is part of normal information processing in the brain – it helps us to make sense of the world and has led to great philosophical insights. However...

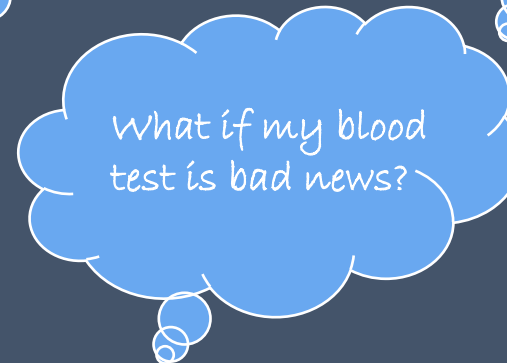
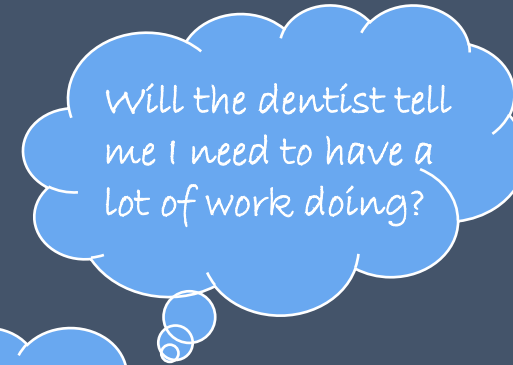
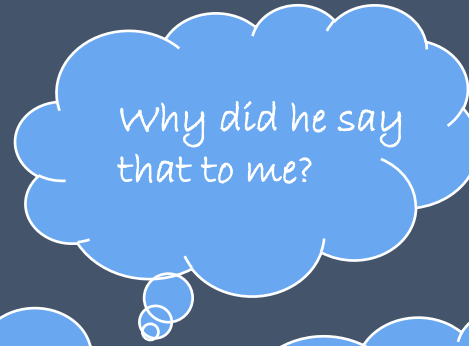
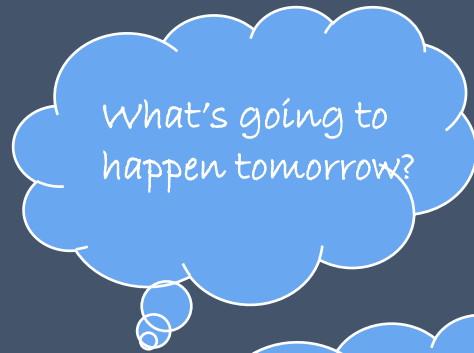
...sometimes the process can malfunction.

This is similar to what happens when a washing machine gets stuck in its “rinse cycle”, with the clothes going round and round to no good effect.

The process has become unhelpful and we need some strategies to help us recognise when this happens and to break out of the cycle.



Here are some examples of worrying...



I'm sure you can think of many of your own.

What do they have in common?

They take the form of questions, many of which cannot be answered.

“You can’t stop the birds of worry from flying around your head, but you can stop them from nesting there.”

[Chinese proverb]



Photo credit: Daniel Masih

Managing Worry - I

The first step is to decide if your worry is helpful or unhelpful.

Worry is helpful if...

- It draws your attention to things that are important. [The rattling sound in the car]
- It leads to action/behaviour that will prevent or reduce the risk of something bad happening.
- It makes you feel better prepared if a difficult situation did arise.

Worry is unhelpful if...

- It is not achieving any of the above.
- It is taking up so much time that you are unable to do other things.
- It is producing lots of unpleasant feelings.
- It is leading you to feel think/feel negatively about everything.

Managing Worry - II

It can be helpful to classify your worries as follows...

1. Those you can do something about

Draw up a plan to deal with them, engage in some problem-solving. Write it down. When these worries return, remind yourself you have a plan.

2. Those you cannot do anything about

Remind yourself that worrying is not going to change anything. Use distraction techniques to help break out of the cycle.

Distraction Techniques

Behavioural

- Going for a walk
- Calling a friend
- Cleaning and tidying (but not excessively!)
- Reading a magazine
- Looking at photos
- Listening to music
- Planning something nice

Cognitive

- Alphabet games – thinking of trees, animals, actors or bands beginning with A, B, C.....
- Soap operas – thinking of the characters and their relationships in your favourite soaps or dramas
- Mental arithmetic
- Focusing on an object and think how you would describe it to someone on the phone. Often our attention is focused inwardly on how we feel when anxious, so focusing outwards can be helpful.

Worry Time

If nothing else works, get into the habit of having a set period of time each day when you will sit down and worry about everything you need to worry about.

Jot down your thoughts if it helps. Spend 10 to 15 minutes on this activity, then follow it with something enjoyable – a meal, a bath or shower, a period of relaxation.

When worries enter your mind at other times in the day, make a mental note of them and tell yourself you will deal with them at the allotted time.

This strategy lets you acknowledge the worries as important, but gives you better control of your time so you can get other things done – thereby reducing worries overall.



Bedtime

“The horns of the bull at night are the ears of the donkey in daylight”.

[Spanish proverb]

It is often the case that our worries seem to take hold in the early hours, or else they prevent us from getting to sleep. One strategy is to use relaxation as a way of clearing your mind, just focusing on your breathing.

If worries persist, try getting into the habit of taking time to plan activities for the next day before going to bed. Review the present day, acknowledge the things that have been good, think about what you want to achieve the following day.



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