

◀ CHAPTER TWELVE ▶



Changing your behaviour

The **Thought Tracker** has helped us to discover that sometimes we have negative and unhelpful thoughts. We think that things will be difficult. We expect and predict the worse. Sometimes it is hard to see anything positive. The **Feeling Finder** has helped us to understand that these thoughts may make us feel uncomfortable. We may try to make ourselves feel better by:

- ▶ **avoiding** situations that we think will be difficult
- ▶ **withdrawing** and staying where we feel safe
- ▶ **stopping** doing things that might make us feel unpleasant.

This may bring some immediate relief, but over time you will probably feel worse. As you do less you may find yourself feeling more and more down. Anything new needs an even greater effort, and it becomes harder to tackle any new challenges. Strong unpleasant feelings flood back as you feel cross and disappointed with yourself.

And so it goes on . . .

and on . . .

and on . . .



An important way of breaking out of this trap is to become more active and take control.

Push yourself to do things.

As you become busier you will notice a number of benefits.



You feel better

Becoming more active means that you have less time to notice any unpleasant feelings or to listen to any negative thoughts. You will start to feel better.

**You feel more in control**

You start to regain control of your life and do the things that you want to do.

**You feel less tired**

Doing nothing is very tiring! You will feel very lethargic and exhausted. Although it sounds silly, the more active you become, the less tired you feel.

**You want to do more**

The hardest thing is to get started. Once you become active you will want to do more. Quite simply, the more you do, the more you feel like doing.

**Your thinking becomes clearer**

Doing nothing makes you feel sluggish both mentally and physically. Activity sharpens up your thinking.

Increase fun activities

The first and hardest job is to get going again. A useful way to do this is to increase your enjoyable activities. Set yourself targets to increase the number of enjoyable activities that you do each day or week.



Make a list of the things you enjoy/want to do and those activities that you used to enjoy and have now stopped.

These can be any activities at all, and remember that they don't have to cost money. They could be:

- ▶ *social activities* – talking to a friend, having someone round for tea
- ▶ *outdoor activities* – going for a walk, swimming, shopping
- ▶ *indoor activities* – listening to music, watching a video, reading a book, drawing.

From your list, choose the activity that you would most like to do. Choose a day, set a time and do it! Gradually build more and more enjoyable activities into your life.



- ▶ Don't expect the activities to be as much fun as they used to be. It will take time for your sense of enjoyment to return.
- ▶ Think about what you have achieved, not the other things you still have to do.
- ▶ **Take time to tell yourself how well you have done! After all, you deserve it.**

Map how you feel and what you do

There will probably be certain times of the day/week when you are more likely to notice strong pleasant or unpleasant feelings. It may be useful to tune into these and find out whether there are any patterns or particularly difficult times.

A useful way of doing this is to keep a diary.



- ▶ Write down what you are doing and how you feel each hour. Use the Feeling Thermometer on page 134 to rate how strong your feelings are.
- ▶ At the end of the week, look at the diary and see if there are any particularly bad/good times and whether any activity made you feel better/worse.

If you find a link between certain activities and strong feelings, then try planning your time differently. Where possible, try to do more of those activities that make you feel good and less of those that make you feel bad.

▶ Jane gets ready for school

Jane got up at 6.30 a.m. each day to go to school. She was dressed and ready to go by 7.15 and then sat around for the next 45 minutes. During this time she would worry about school, her work and what she would say to her friends. By 8.00, when it was time to leave home, she felt very worried and unhappy and often felt unable to go to school.

Once Jane had identified this pattern, she tried to arrange her morning routine differently. She got up later, at 7.30. This meant that all her time before leaving for school was now taken up. She was busy and had less time to worry about what might happen.

At other times when she woke up early she got herself ready for school, but instead of sitting in a chair, she practised her musical instrument until it was time to leave the house. Jane found that her music helped her to feel relaxed. She was busy, she felt calm, and her mind was no longer playing tricks on her.

▶ **Mary returns home**

Mary was always the first home from school and had one hour on her own before anyone else arrived. She kept a diary and discovered that this was the worst time of the day for her. She felt very scared of being on her own and thought that horrible things would happen to her.

Mary decided to change her routine. Instead of coming straight home after school, she planned something different. She arranged to do the things she enjoyed. She went shopping, visited friends and went to the library. She now arrived home at the same time as the rest of her family feeling calmer and happier.

Small steps

Sometimes starting an activity might seem too large a step to tackle all in one go.



- ▶ At these times it might be useful to break down the task into smaller steps.
- ▶ Each smaller step feels more manageable.
- ▶ This increases the chances of success, and each step will move you closer to your target.

▶ **Judy wants to swim**

Judy liked swimming, but over the past six months she had become down-hearted and unhappy and had not been swimming at all. She listed all of the activities that she wanted to start again, and chose swimming with her friend Susan as her number-one choice. Although she wanted to do it, the thought of going swimming with Susan seemed an enormous challenge. Judy decided to break this task down into the following smaller steps which she felt she could handle.

- ▶ Step 1. Go to the swimming baths and find out about opening times and cost.
- ▶ Step 2. Go on her own late one evening for a short 10-minute swim.
- ▶ Step 3. Go on her own late one evening for a 30-minute swim.
- ▶ Step 4. Go swimming on her own one morning (when it was busier) for 30 minutes.
- ▶ Step 5. Go swimming with Susan one morning for 30 minutes.

Breaking the task down into smaller steps made it easier for Judy to be successful.

Face your fears



Breaking tasks down into smaller steps is helpful, but you may still put off doing them because you **feel too anxious**. Anxious feelings often stop us doing the things we would really like to do. However, by not doing them we then have to cope with other unpleasant feelings such as sadness and anger.

- ▶ You might feel very frightened about going to school, but staying at home might make you feel sad.
- ▶ You might feel scared about going out with your friends, but staying in on your own might make you feel angry.

At these times it can be useful to *face your fears* and learn to overcome them. You can do this by going through the following steps.

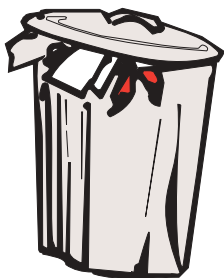
- ▶ Stage 1. Use **small steps** to break down your challenge into smaller tasks.
- ▶ Stage 2. Think about **copng self-talk** and practise using it.
- ▶ Stage 3. **Relax and imagine** yourself successfully coping with your first task.
- ▶ Stage 4. **Test it out**, one task at a time.
- ▶ Stage 5. **Praise yourself** for being successful.

▶ Kim is afraid to go out

Kim felt afraid to go out of the house on her own ever since she was pushed over by a gang of boys. She was feeling very unhappy about being trapped in her house but was very scared about going out. She decided to **face her fears**.

- ▶ *Stage 1.* Kim decided that she would like to be able to go to the shop at the bottom of her road. By using **small steps** she identified the following tasks:
 - 1 to stand by her front gate for a couple of minutes
 - 2 to go outside the gate and then return home
 - 3 to go outside the gate, walk to the bus stop and then return home
 - 4 to walk to the shops (not to go into them) and then return home
 - 5 to walk to the shops and go into them.
- ▶ *Stage 2.* Kim thought about her **coping self-talk** and as she imagined herself walking to the gate she would say 'I'm safe, no one will hurt me in my garden, I'm going to walk to the gate'.
- ▶ *Stage 3.* Kim imagined her relaxing place. Once she was **relaxed, she imagined** a picture of herself coming out of the house and calmly walking to the front gate and then returning into her house.
- ▶ *Stage 4.* After imagining this a few times and practising her coping self-talk, Kim felt ready to **test it out**. She decided that the best time to face her fears was during school-time when she would be less likely to meet any groups of children. She chose the time, relaxed herself, used her coping self-talk and tested her first step.
- ▶ *Stage 5.* When she came in after being successful, Kim **praised and rewarded** herself with a mug of hot chocolate and a biscuit! She practised this step a few times before moving on to the next one.

Dump your habits



Sometimes our behaviour becomes a problem because there are things we can't stop doing. You may find that you are always:

- ▶ **checking** – that doors are shut or that lights or taps are turned off
- ▶ **cleaning** – perhaps your room, or changing your clothes or washing your hands
- ▶ **counting** – having to repeat things three or four times or doing things in a certain order.

Habits like these are often a way of switching off anxious or unpleasant feelings. The Feeling Finder has helped us to learn that these feelings are usually brought about by our thoughts. For example, we may **think** that if we:



- ▶ don't constantly check then something bad will happen
- ▶ don't constantly clean then we might catch germs and diseases or pass these on to others
- ▶ don't count and do things in a certain order then someone may be hurt.

The habits may make you feel better, but the relief that they bring does not last. It will not be long before the thoughts and unpleasant feelings return and the habits have to be repeated again and again and again.

When this happens, you need to **dump your habits** and prove that anxious feelings can be turned off **without** using your habits.

- ▶ Step 1. Use **small steps** and put your habits in order, with those that are most difficult to stop at the top, and easier habits at the bottom.
- ▶ Step 2. **Plan to be successful.**
 - 1 When will you try your first step?
 - 2 Plan how you will deal with your unpleasant feelings.
 - 3 What coping self-talk will you use?
 - 4 Do you need someone to help you to dump your habits?
- ▶ Step 3. Try it, but this time **dump your habits** and see how long you can manage without using them. When you start to hold on in this way, use the **Feeling Thermometer** on page 134 to rate how you feel. Keep holding on, **dump your habits**, and keep rating your feelings. You will find that your worrying feelings will start to decrease!
- ▶ Step 4. Remember to **praise yourself** for being successful.



You will probably need to practise each step a few times. It may also be useful to involve someone else who can help to make sure that you don't use your habits. Once you have been successful, move on to the next step and remember that feelings can be turned off without using habits.

▶ David is worried about germs

David stood in some dog mess and became very worried about germs. He was always cleaning his shoes, and after he had finished doing this he would wash his hands over and over again. If he felt that his hands were dirty, then he would have to clean anything he touched, including his clothes – which he changed three or four times each day. David had finally reached the stage where he wanted to **dump his habits**.

- ▶ *Step 1.* David used **small steps** and put his habits in order. He thought that the following would be the easiest to stop:
 - 1 delay changing his clothes for 30 minutes
 - 2 only change his clothes once a day
 - 3 limit his hand-washing, and each time wash his hands no more than twice.

The list went on until David reached the final stage of walking around the house in his shoes.

- ▶ *Step 2.* David **planned to be successful**. He decided that he would keep his mind occupied by using distraction tasks (puzzles), and he practised his coping self-talk: 'I am in charge. I don't need to use these habits to feel good'.
- ▶ *Step 3.* David tried it. As soon as he felt the need to change his clothes he tried to wait and **dump his habits**. He used the **Feeling Thermometer** and gave himself a fear rating of 8. After 5 minutes his feelings had got worse and had gone up to number 9. He held on, used his **coping self-talk** and tried to relax. After 15 minutes the feelings didn't seem so strong, and his fear rating was now down to 5. He held out for 30 minutes and then changed his clothes.
- ▶ *Step 4.* David was really **pleased with himself**, and treated himself to a special video.

The next time he tried this he held out for over an hour. The feelings seemed to become less strong even though he didn't use his habits.



- ▶ Activity can help you to feel better and gives you less time to listen to your negative thoughts.
- ▶ If there are times of the day or week that are difficult, plan your timetable differently.
- ▶ Break your challenges down into smaller steps. This will help you to be successful.
- ▶ Face your fears and learn to overcome your difficulties.
- ▶ If you have problems with checking, cleaning or counting, then learn to dump your habits.
- ▶ Keep practising, and reward yourself when you have done well.



Activity diary

Keep a diary each day of what you have done and how you have felt. Use the Feeling Thermometer on page 134 to rate the strength of these feelings.

Is there any pattern linking what you do and how you feel?

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Feelings</i>
7.00 Morning	
8.00	
9.00	
10.00	
11.00	
12.00	
1.00 Afternoon	
2.00	
3.00	
4.00	
5.00	
6.00	
7.00	
8.00	
9.00	
10.00	
11.00	
12.00	



Next step up the ladder



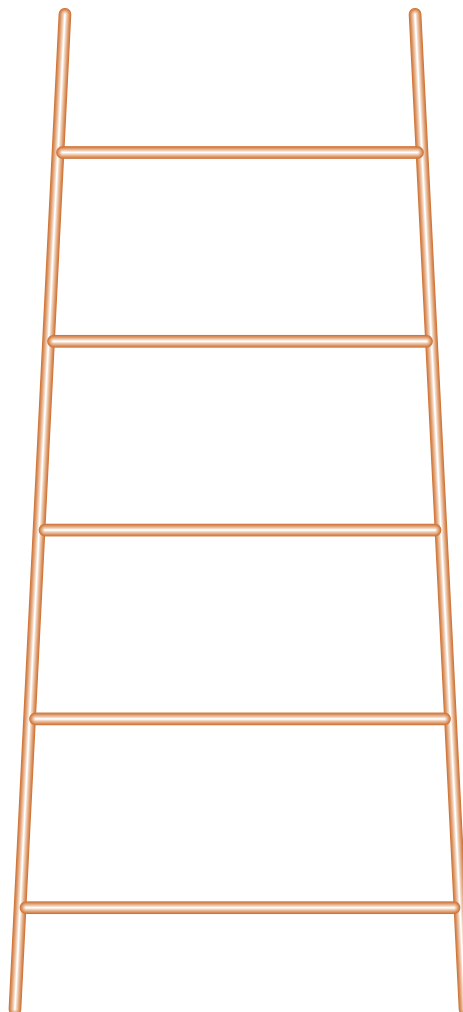
There are probably lots of things you would like to do. Some of them will seem fairly easy and others will feel more difficult.

Write or draw all of the things you would like to do on a piece of paper. Cut them out and arrange them on the ladder below.

Put those that feel easiest at the bottom, the most difficult ones at the top, and the slightly easier ones in the middle.

Start at the bottom and see if you can complete your next task up the ladder. When you are successful, climb up to the next step and try that one. Taking small steps will help you to climb your ladder.

Hardest



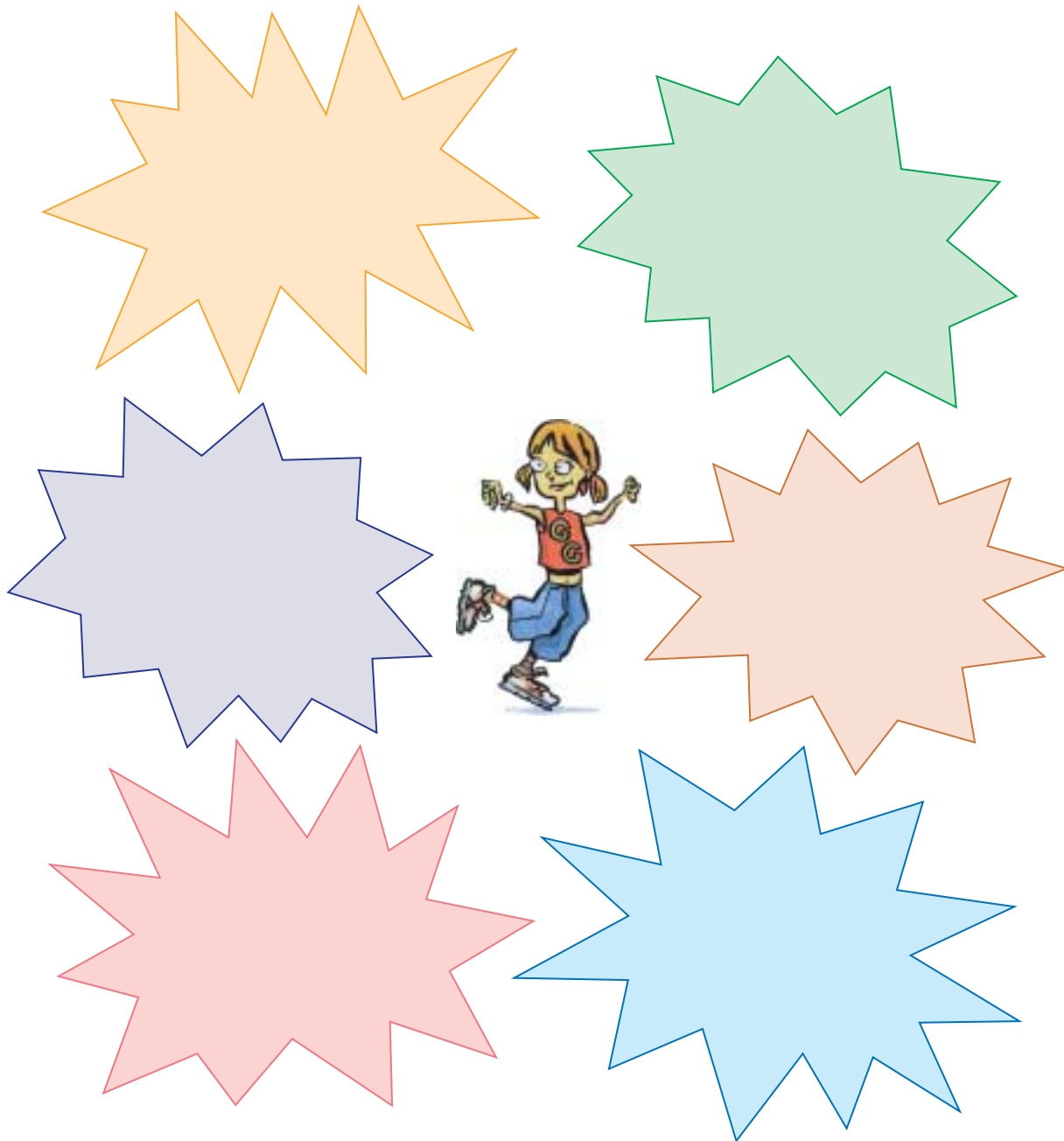
Easiest

Things that make me feel good



Write down or draw the places, activities or people that make you feel good.

Things that make me feel unpleasant



Write down or draw the places, activities or people that make you feel unpleasant.

Things I would like to do



A central cartoon girl with pigtails, wearing a red t-shirt with a 'G' logo and blue pants, is jumping joyfully. She is surrounded by six large, colorful starburst shapes: a purple one at the top left, a pink one at the top right, an orange one on the middle left, a blue one on the middle right, a green one at the bottom left, and a peach one at the bottom right.

Write down or draw the things that you would like to do and the things you would like to do more often.

THINK GOOD – FEEL GOOD



Face your fears



My challenge is:

Stage 1. Use **small steps** to break down your challenge into easier stages.

My steps to success are:

Stage 2. What is your **coping self-talk**?

Stage 3. **Relax and imagine** yourself being successful. Repeat your coping self-talk as you imagine successfully achieving your first step. Practise this a few times.

Stage 4. Choose a time when you will face your fear, relax and **test it out**. Remember to use your coping self-talk.

Stage 5. **Praise and reward** yourself for being successful.



You may want to practise each step a few times, but once you feel confident move on to the next one, and repeat each step until you have overcome your fear.



Small steps



Sometimes tasks or challenges seem too big. When this happens, we need to break them down into smaller steps. This will make each step more possible and help you to be successful.

What is your task or challenge?

Break your task or challenge down into smaller steps and write them down or draw them in this box.

Look at all of the steps and arrange them in order of difficulty. Put the easiest ones at the bottom of the page and the hardest at the top.



Start with the easiest step. Once you have been successful, move on to the next. Breaking tasks or challenges down into smaller steps can help you to be successful.



Dump your habits



Stage 1. Use **small steps**. Write down all of your habits and put them in order, with those that are easiest to stop at the bottom, and those that are hardest to stop at the top.

My steps to success are:

Stage 2. Plan to be successful.

What is the easiest habit to stop?

When will you try your challenge and dump this habit?

How will you keep calm?

What is your coping self-talk?

Do you need anyone to help you to dump your habits? Who can help?

Stage 3. Try it and dump your habit. Use the **Feeling Thermometer** on page 134 to keep rating how you are feeling.

Stage 4. Praise and reward yourself for being successful.