



WORKBOOK *exerpt*

UNDERSTANDING WORRY AND STRESS

DR. CHRIS WILLIAMS



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Québec Division
Mental health for all

In partnership with:

Québec 

IT TAKES
ME AGES
TO FALL
ASLEEP

I AM FAR MORE IRRITABLE THAN I USED TO BE

I FEEL SO TIRED

I JUST CAN'T SIT STILL

I KEEP FORGETTING THINGS

I KEEP GOING OVER
THINGS IN MY MIND

...IS THIS YOU? IF SO... THIS WORKBOOK IS FOR YOU.

I FEEL SHORT OF
BREATH SOMETIMES

I FEEL LIKE CRYING
WHEN THINGS GO
WRONG

I FEEL HOT AND
FLUSTERED

I CAN'T
HELP BUT
WORRY

THEY MUST THINK
I'M SO INDECISIVE

I CAN'T COPE

I GET TENSION
HEADACHES



IN THIS WORKBOOK YOU WILL:

- Understand the impact of anxiety, worry and stress.
- Identify the areas you need to deal with to overcome your own anxiety problems.

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

The words stressed, hassled, tense and worried all describe forms of anxiety. Anxiety is a normal and common feeling (emotion) that can be helpful even though it can feel unpleasant. For example, a small amount of anxiety can help motivate some people to prepare for events such as interviews and exams, or even just crossing the street. Anxiety is also helpful in situations involving sudden danger, where it helps you to respond and get away from the possible danger as quickly as possible.

Anxiety becomes a problem when people feel:

- Anxious in situations that are not dangerous at all.
- Extremely anxious—well beyond what is helpful anxiety. For example, being so worried about things that you can't fall asleep.

WHAT ARE WORRY AND STRESS?

Worrying thoughts are common in anxiety.

Worry causes you to think again and again about things in the past, the present or what might happen in the future. This type of constant, anxious worrying is sometimes called generalized anxiety, that is, people feel generally anxious about many things in life.

KEYPOINT

When people worry, they anxiously go over things again and again in a way that is unhelpful. It often feels like they are thinking through problems—however, it really just involves mulling things over again and again. This is very different from effective, practical problem solving.



WORRY AND STRESS CHECKLIST

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Am I worried about things on most days? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| Do I find it hard to stop worrying? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| Am I anxiously going over things again and again in my mind in a way that hasn't actually helped me sort out my problems? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| Do anxious worries make me stressed out and feel on edge? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| Do I feel mentally and physically tired as a result of my worry? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| Have anxious thoughts caused me to reduce or stop what I do? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| Have worrying thoughts caused me to avoid dealing with my problems or other people? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| Am I downplaying my own ability to cope? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |

If you have answered ‘yes’ or ‘sometimes’ to several of the questions on the previous page, anxiety may be a problem for you.

Worrying thoughts can also occur alongside other problems such as:

- **Panic attacks**—people may have panic attacks when they are extremely anxious or full of fear. If you think this could happen to you, the workbook *Understanding panic and phobias* will help you find out more about these conditions.
- **Depression**—people who are depressed often also tend to have anxious thoughts. The depressing thoughts are linked to low mood, a lack of enjoyment and reduced activity. The book *Understanding low mood and depression* can help you find out more about low mood and depression.

The next step is to see how worry and stress are affecting you.

FEELING OUT OF BALANCE—WHEN WORRY OR STRESS STARTS TO GET WORSE AND WORSE

Normally, most people feel able to cope with the problems they face. When you are in balance, you know you can deal with your problems. So it isn't your situation or problem alone that causes you to feel worried or stressed. Instead it's how you think about these things that makes you feel like you do. And dwelling on problems and getting things out of perspective doesn't help you feel better or make your problem go away.

If you feel out of balance some or all of the time, this program can help you get your balance back.

Let's start by finding out more about the Five Areas™ Approach. This can help you understand how worry and stress are affecting your life.

Do I feel in balance at the moment?

- Yes No
 Sometimes

UNDERSTANDING HOW YOU FEEL USING THE FIVE AREAS™ APPROACH

One helpful way of understanding how worry or stress affects you is to think of the ways that it affects the different areas of your life. The Five Areas™ Approach can help you to do this by looking in detail at five important areas of your life.

The five areas are:

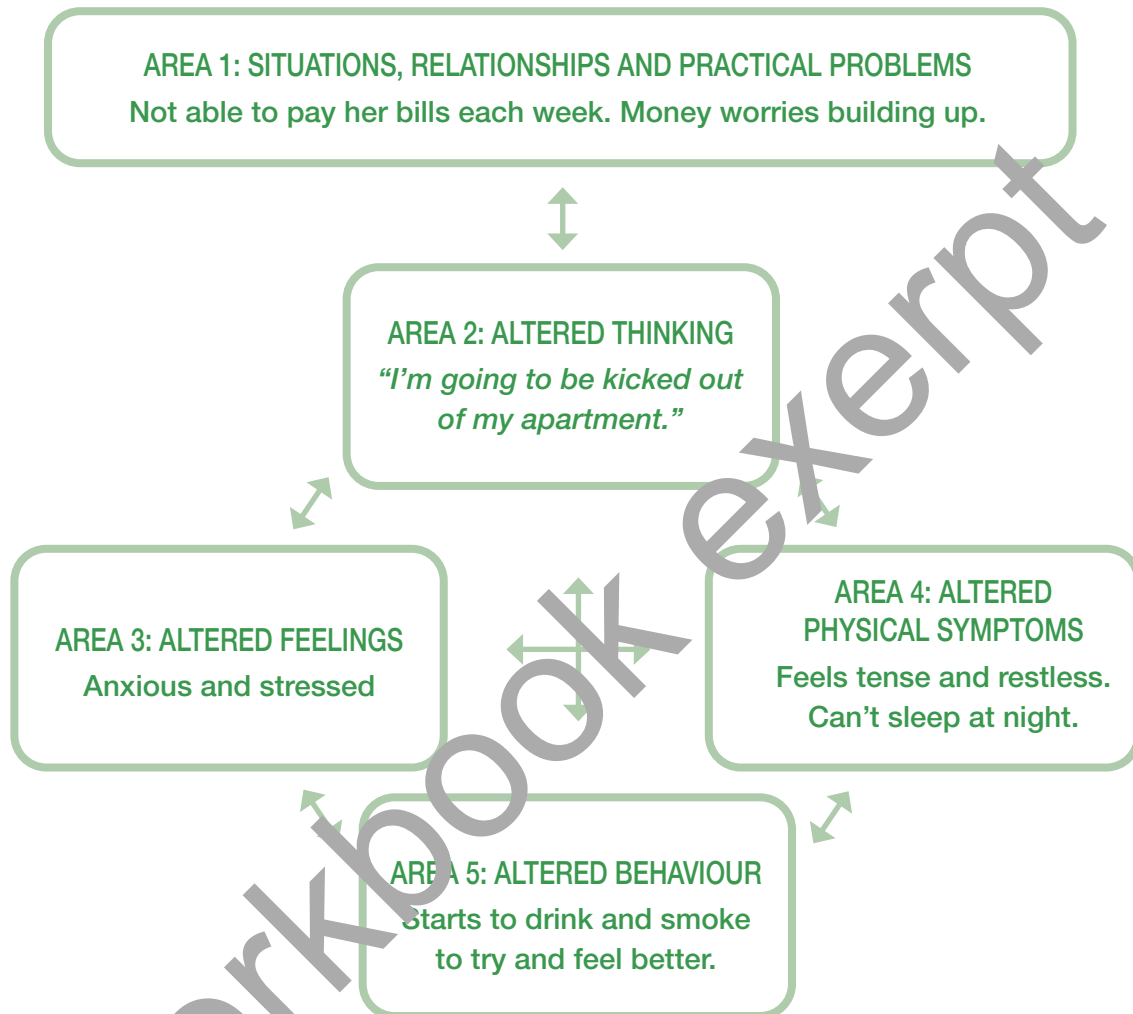
- **Area 1: The situations, relationships and practical problems around you.**
- **Area 2: Your thinking.** In worry, people overestimate how hard things are, and underestimate their ability to cope with things.
- **Area 3: Your feelings (also called moods or emotions).** You can feel tense, anxious, irritable, low, ashamed or guilty when you are stressed.
- **Area 4: Any altered physical symptoms in your body.** For example, you may feel shaky, sweaty or restless or you may notice tension or tightness in your body. These different bodily sensations are described in more detail later.
- **Area 5: Your altered behaviour or activity levels.** This includes both the helpful things you can do to make you feel better, and the unhelpful things you do, which backfire and make you feel even worse.

Try to think about how the Five Areas™ Assessment can help Helen understand how she is feeling.



EXAMPLE

Helen is struggling with worry about debt. The figure below shows how Helen's problems can be summarized using the Five Areas™ Approach.



The Five Areas diagram shows that what you think about a situation or problem can affect how you feel physically and emotionally. It also shows that your thinking affects what you do (your behaviour or activity levels). Look at the arrows in the diagram. All of the five areas of your life affect each other.

Let's take a look at what's happening for you in each of the five areas, starting with Area 1.

AREA 1: SITUATIONS, RELATIONSHIPS AND PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

All of us face practical problems from time to time, such as:

- Problems with family and life at home.
- The challenges of bringing up young children.
- Problems in relationships with partners, friends or colleagues.
- Other life challenges—for example, problems at work or college.



YOU CAN DO IT! MAKE A PLAN

1 WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

4 WHAT PROBLEMS/DIFFICULTIES COULD ARISE, AND HOW CAN I OVERCOME THIS?

What could get in the way? Write your possible blocks here:

Do you need to re-write your plan to deal with these possible blocks?

2 WHEN AM I GOING TO DO IT?

5 WRITE DOWN YOUR FINAL PLAN HERE

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it? (day and time)

3 IS MY PLANNED TASK:

	Yes	No
Useful for helping me move forward?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear, so that I will know when I have done it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Something that I value, or need to do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Realistic, practical and achievable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

YOUR BACKUP PLAN

Think of another backup solution you could turn to if, for whatever reason, there are problems with your plan.



KEYPOINT

If you feel worse you can still choose to do the planned activity anyway—because it's important.



OK, HOW DID IT GO?

1 WHAT DID YOU PLAN TO DO?

Write it here:

2 DID YOU TRY TO DO IT?

If yes:

What went well?

What didn't go so well?

What have you learned from what happened?

How are you going to apply what you have learned?

If no, what stopped you?

Internal things (forgot, not enough time, put it off, didn't think I could do it, couldn't see the point, etc.)

External things (other people, work or home issues, etc.)

How could you have planned to deal with these things?

A FIVE AREAS™ ASSESSMENT OF A SPECIFIC TIME WHEN I FELT WORSE PHYSICALLY OR EMOTIONALLY

AREA 1: SITUATIONS, RELATIONSHIPS AND PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

What time of day was it? Where was I? Who was I with?
What was I doing? What was said/happened?



AREA 2: ALTERED THINKING

What went through my mind at the time?



AREA 3: ALTERED FEELINGS

How did I feel emotionally at the time?
Was I anxious/ashamed/depressed/angry?



AREA 4: ALTERED PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

What strong physical sensations did I notice at the time?



AREA 5: ALTERED BEHAVIOUR

What did I do differently? Did I stop doing what I was doing, or start doing something different?

Workbook excerpt