Worry diary

Use brief notes or estimates. Record selected examples afterwards; there is no need to monitor constantly.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

When and how often to record

ENTRY 1 - date / time: _____

Situation / trigger

Main worry; intensity 0 (none)-10 (most)

What I did next

Effect now / later

ENTRY 2 - date / time: _____

Situation / trigger

Main worry; intensity 0 (none)-10 (most)

What I did next

Effect now / later

Pattern noticed / next step

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Worry cycle

A simple map of one worry episode. Start at the top and follow the arrows.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.



The return arrow shows how later effects can keep the pattern going.

An uncertainty-focused episode map, informed by Dugas et al. (1998); not the full treatment model.

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Worry decision worksheet

For a mixed worry, act on the practical part and allow the remaining uncertainty to be there.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

My worry, briefly

Is there a current difficulty with a useful step I can take?

YES - practical part

NO ACTION NOW - uncertain part

Choose one useful action

What cannot be settled now?

Act now or schedule a step

How to leave the uncertainty unresolved

Return to a chosen activity

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Uncertainty experiment

Make a specific prediction and a fair test. Plan any safeguards before practice; record observations afterwards.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

BEFORE PRACTICE

Situation / belief about uncertainty (0-100%)

Prediction / another possibility

My task / habit to change / safeguards

AFTER PRACTICE - observations and learning

What happened / how I coped

Learning / belief now (0-100%)

Next step

Plan this exercise with your therapist and keep necessary care, access support and real precautions.

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Worry beliefs experiment

Compare practical preparation with your usual extra worry. Do not deliberately increase worry for this exercise.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Belief about worry / prediction (0-100%)

Practical preparation only - tried

What I did / usual pattern

What it contributed to the task

Outcome and how I coped

Extra worry - usual pattern

What I did / usual pattern

What it contributed to the task

Outcome and how I coped

What I learned / what is still uncertain

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Worry postponement diary

Try returning attention to your day without forcing worries away. Do not delay urgent action or necessary care.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Review time and brief duration

Activity to return to after the review

Brief worry note	Activity I returned to	At review: action or uncertainty?

What helped me re-engage?

What to change / whether to stop

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Worry setback plan

Keep the learning visible. Match each early sign with a practical response rather than waiting for a difficult week.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

What I have learned

If I notice...	A small response I can use	Support / when to review

Helpful habits to keep

Support / when to ask for help

Review date / reminder

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Toolkit guide and contents

The worksheets come first. Select what fits your goals; you do not need to complete every sheet.

Using this collection

These resources support understanding and practice; they are not a complete treatment programme or a diagnosis. NICE CG113 covers adults, so people aged 16-17 need age-appropriate assessment and adaptation. Do not postpone urgent action, medical care or real safety concerns. Experiments should preserve necessary responsibilities and precautions. If worry substantially disrupts sleep, functioning or safety, seek professional help.

Worksheet starting pages

01 Worry diary

02 Worry cycle

03 Worry decision worksheet

04 Uncertainty experiment

05 Worry beliefs experiment

06 Worry postponement diary

07 Worry setback plan

Guidance and fictional examples follow this index. Individual website downloads also contain fillable fields; this complete toolkit is for printing.

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Using this resource

Worry diary

What this helps with

Worry often moves quickly between topics. A short diary can help you notice the situations that start it and the responses that keep it taking up time. You do not need to capture every thought or rate yourself constantly. Choose a few ordinary examples, record them briefly after the event, and review what repeats. The useful question is what happens around the worry, as well as what the worry says.

How to use it

1. Choose one or two moments a day for three days; a brief note is enough.
2. Record the trigger and the main "what if" thought in your own words.
3. Note worry intensity from 0-10 and your response: planning, checking, reassurance, avoidance or something else.
4. Notice the immediate effect and what happened later. Review patterns at the end of the three days.

A fictional worked example

At 5 pm, Aisha notices that tomorrow's meeting has no agenda. Her thought is, "What if I am asked something and have no answer?" Worry is 7/10. She rereads old emails for 40 minutes and asks a colleague twice what the meeting is about. She feels briefly more prepared, then thinks of another possible question. Looking at three diary entries, she notices that missing information regularly starts a search for certainty. Her next step is to discuss a small experiment around ordinary uncertainty, rather than prepare answers to every possible meeting question.

Keep in mind

Keep notes brief. If recording every thought becomes another checking task, reduce the frequency or bring the diary to therapy. This diary is not a diagnostic test. A real, urgent problem still needs a practical response rather than being put aside as worry.

Sources and attribution

Dugas, M. J., Gagnon, F., Ladouceur, R., & Freeston, M. H. (1998). Generalized anxiety disorder: A preliminary test of a conceptual model. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 36(2), 215-226.

NICE (2011, updated 2020). Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder in adults: management (CG113).

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Using this resource

Worry cycle

What this helps with

This individual episode map explores how the meaning given to uncertainty, worry and responses such as checking or mental rehearsal may keep a difficulty going. Immediate effects vary: a response can bring relief, more worry or little change. Later effects may leave uncertainty feeling threatening. The diagram is informed by intolerance-of-uncertainty approaches; it is not a reproduction of the full Dugas model.

How to use it

1. Choose one uncertain situation and record it briefly.
2. Write what not knowing seemed to mean, including any rule about needing certainty or being prepared.
3. Describe worry, feelings and sensations, then what you did in response.
4. Record the immediate and later effects, including what happened to worry and confidence in coping.
5. Read from top to bottom, then follow the return arrow. Which link fits your experience? Discuss a possible change separately; the change itself is not part of the maintaining cycle.

A fictional worked example

Ben sends an application and receives no reply. Not knowing feels like evidence that something has gone wrong. His rule is, "If I prepare for every outcome, I will not be caught out." He worries about rejection, feels tense and checks his inbox repeatedly. Checking briefly gives him a sense of doing something, but the unanswered question remains. He puts off dinner with a friend because he feels he should keep preparing. The map highlights both the search for certainty and the cost to his evening. His first experiment may be leaving the inbox closed during dinner.

Keep in mind

This map is a possible explanation, not a diagnosis or a judgement. Include real pressures, discrimination, financial difficulties and caring demands where relevant. If worries are overwhelming or linked to a complex situation, develop the map with a therapist rather than trying to explain everything alone.

Sources and attribution

Dugas, M. J., Gagnon, F., Ladouceur, R., & Freeston, M. H. (1998). Generalized anxiety disorder: A preliminary test of a conceptual model. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 36(2), 215-226.

Hebert, E. A., & Dugas, M. J. (2019). Behavioral experiments for intolerance of uncertainty: Challenging the unknown in the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder. Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 26(2), 421-436. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2018.07.007

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Using this resource

Worry decision worksheet

What this helps with

Some worries point to a current problem that needs action. Others ask for certainty about a future possibility that cannot be settled now. The same concern can contain both. Sorting them can help you choose a useful next step: act on what is within reach, or make room for an unanswered question while returning to your day. A practical step does not need to remove all anxiety to be worthwhile.

How to use it

1. Write the concern as one sentence. Is there a current problem, or mainly an uncertain possibility?
2. For a practical problem, define a manageable goal and list two possible actions.
3. Choose one action, when you will do it and any help needed.
4. For a hypothetical worry, name what remains uncertain and an activity to return to. Review after taking action.

A fictional worked example

Leah worries, "What if I cannot afford next month's bills and everything falls apart?" There is a practical part: she has not checked the dates of two payments. She plans 15 minutes on Saturday to review those dates and contact the provider if needed. There is also an uncertain part: she cannot guarantee that no unexpected cost will arise. After making her plan, she notices the urge to keep calculating worst cases. She writes, "The next action is scheduled; the rest is uncertainty," and returns to cooking. She can review the practical plan when she has new information.

Keep in mind

Do not postpone immediate safety needs, safeguarding concerns, urgent bills or medical care because you label a concern "worry". Seek practical support where needed. If sorting worries turns into prolonged analysis, use a brief time limit and discuss the pattern with a therapist.

Sources and attribution

NHS Every Mind Matters. Tackling your worries. Accessed 24 October 2026.

Dugas, M. J., Gagnon, F., Ladouceur, R., & Freeston, M. H. (1998). Generalized anxiety disorder: A preliminary test of a conceptual model. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 36(2), 215-226.

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Using this resource

Uncertainty experiment

What this helps with

Trying to remove every doubt can gradually make uncertainty feel less manageable. A behavioural experiment offers a different kind of learning: testing a specific prediction in an ordinary situation. The target is your belief about what uncertainty means or what you can cope with, not a promise that nothing disappointing will ever happen. Begin with a safe, low-stakes choice that fits your circumstances and review the result with curiosity.

How to use it

1. Choose an everyday uncertainty and write exactly what you predict will happen; rate belief 0-100%.
2. Select one certainty-seeking habit to reduce, such as asking a second person to confirm an ordinary choice.
3. Plan a small, safe experiment and what you will observe. Keep necessary preparation.
4. Try it, record the outcome and your coping, then update the belief and choose a next step.

A fictional worked example

Imran usually asks three friends whether an everyday email sounds acceptable. His prediction is, "If I send it after one reasonable check, I will make a mistake I cannot handle," believed 80%. He chooses a low-stakes email asking about a hobby group and checks only the date and meaning once. He feels uncertain afterwards but attends to another task. The organiser replies with the information he needs. Imran notices that uncertainty did not prevent action. He also decides that a minor misunderstanding could be clarified. One email cannot establish a universal rule, so he plans another modest test.

Keep in mind

Use ordinary, low-stakes situations. Do not experiment with road safety, medication, medical advice, safeguarding, major financial decisions or necessary professional checks. If reducing reassurance feels unmanageable, plan the task with a therapist. Feeling some uncertainty is expected; severe deterioration calls for review and support.

Sources and attribution

Dugas, M. J., et al. (2022). Behavioral experiments for intolerance of uncertainty: A randomized clinical trial for adults with generalized anxiety disorder. Behavior Therapy, 53(6), 1147-1160.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Using this resource

Worry beliefs experiment

What this helps with

People often dislike worry and still believe it helps them care, prepare or prevent mistakes. It can be useful to separate repeated mental rehearsal from the practical actions that actually help. This exercise explores one belief using an everyday task. It does not ask you to stop caring or abandon preparation. You are examining whether extra worry adds useful information after a reasonable plan is in place.

How to use it

1. Complete the sentence: "Worry helps me because..." and rate belief 0-100%.
2. Choose a low-stakes task and define the practical preparation it reasonably needs.
3. Predict what will happen if you do that preparation without deliberately continuing the mental rehearsal.
4. Afterwards compare preparation, repeated worry, outcome and coping. Consider other explanations before drawing conclusions.

A fictional worked example

Maya believes, "If I keep worrying about a family visit, I will remember everything," at 85%. She plans the necessary preparation: check the time, choose food and write a short shopping list. Her prediction is that leaving further rehearsal alone will mean forgetting something important. She notices worry returning, acknowledges it and goes back to her evening rather than trying to force the thought away. The next day she forgets napkins, borrows some and still enjoys the visit. She learns that useful preparation and flexible coping mattered; continuing to worry was not the same as being caring or organised.

Keep in mind

Do not deliberately increase distress to create a comparison day. Use observations of your usual pattern and a low-stakes alternative. Keep responsibilities and necessary checks. If the exercise becomes a rule that you must never worry, discuss this in therapy and adjust it.

Sources and attribution

Dugas, M. J., Gagnon, F., Ladouceur, R., & Freeston, M. H. (1998). Generalized anxiety disorder: A preliminary test of a conceptual model. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 36(2), 215-226.

Dugas, M. J., et al. (2022). Behavioral experiments for intolerance of uncertainty: A randomized clinical trial for adults with generalized anxiety disorder. Behavior Therapy, 53(6), 1147-1160.

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Using this resource

Worry postponement diary

What this helps with

A planned worry-review period can be a practical way to choose when to engage with recurring worries. It is an optional attentional strategy, alongside a wider CBT plan, rather than the defining intervention in the intolerance-of-uncertainty model. When a worry appears, you can note it briefly and return to your task while allowing the thought to be there. The aim is more choice about engagement, not suppressing thoughts or achieving a perfectly quiet mind.

How to use it

1. Choose a brief review period, around 10-15 minutes, at a time that does not disrupt sleep.
2. When hypothetical worry appears, note a few words and gently return attention to what you were doing.
3. At review time, look only at worries still relevant. Use practical problem solving where action is possible.
4. End at the agreed time and return to an activity. Review whether the approach helps; adapt or stop if it leads to more repetitive thinking.

A fictional worked example

Tom notices several worries while studying. He writes "exam result" once and reminds himself that he can review it at 6 pm. The thought returns; he does not argue with it or repeatedly add it to the list. He gently returns to the paragraph in front of him. At 6 pm the exam result is still uncertain, but a separate worry about revision has a practical next step. He plans one topic for tomorrow and ends the review. His mind is not completely calm, but he has spent more of the afternoon studying instead of wrestling with every prediction.

Keep in mind

Do not defer urgent action, medical needs or genuine threats. Avoid repeatedly recording the same worry or using review time for extended worst-case rehearsal. If this approach worsens worry, sleep or distress, stop and discuss alternatives. It is not required for everyone with GAD.

Sources and attribution

NHS Every Mind Matters. Tackling your worries. Accessed 24 October 2026.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Using this resource

Worry setback plan

What this helps with

Worry may increase during change, stress or tiredness, even after useful progress. Planning for this can help you respond without treating a difficult week as failure. Your plan should draw on what you have actually learned, including which experiments helped and which strategies became another form of checking. Choose a few practical reminders and a clear support route. You do not need a plan that prevents every anxious thought.

How to use it

1. Summarise the worry cycle you now recognise and the changes that made a difference.
2. Identify upcoming pressures and your early signs of returning to certainty-seeking.
3. Choose a small response: practical action, an uncertainty experiment, or reconnecting with an activity.
4. Agree a review date and signs that mean you will ask for more support. Keep the plan somewhere accessible.

A fictional worked example

After several useful weeks, Noor starts a new job and notices herself asking colleagues repeatedly whether she is doing well. Her warning sign is reopening the same question after a clear answer. Her plan is to clarify actual expectations in supervision, then practise leaving everyday uncertainty unanswered between reviews. She keeps one weekly note about what she has learnt rather than tracking every worry. If checking starts taking substantial time again or she is avoiding work, she will contact her therapist or GP. She writes, "More worry during change is a cue to use my learning and ask for support."

Keep in mind

A setback plan supports continuing care; it is not a substitute for assessment if your needs change. Seek additional help when worry substantially affects sleep, daily functioning or safety. For people aged 16-17, agree an age-appropriate support plan with a suitably qualified professional.

Sources and attribution

Dugas, M. J., Gagnon, F., Ladouceur, R., & Freeston, M. H. (1998). Generalized anxiety disorder: A preliminary test of a conceptual model. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 36(2), 215-226.

NICE (2011, updated 2020). Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder in adults: management (CG113).

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Attention practice record

Choose a short, safe everyday task. Thoughts are allowed to come along.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

What activity will I practise with?

What will I notice in the task or surroundings?

What might pull my attention away?

How will I return attention without arguing with the thought?

What happened during the practice?

What did I learn, and what will I practise next?

Your notes stay in your copy of this PDF. Keep them private; nothing is sent to this website.

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Attention practice record - guide

Use alongside the worksheet on page 1. Adapt it to your needs and any therapy plan.

What this helps with

Worry can pull attention away from what we are doing. Attention practice means noticing this and gently choosing where to place your attention next. The aim is flexibility and participation, not an empty mind or immediate relief from anxiety.

How to use it

1. Pick a safe, ordinary task you want to take part in. Start briefly; adapt the activity to your senses, energy and concentration.

2. Choose a few details of the task to notice, without needing to scan for every detail.

3. When the mind wanders, acknowledge it and return to the activity. You do not need to push the thought away or repeat a phrase perfectly.

4. Record participation and learning afterwards. Practise occasionally rather than whenever you need certainty that you are calm.

A fictional example

Before a meeting, Sam notices repeated predictions about making a mistake. While making tea, he attends to the cup, the kettle sound and the sequence of the task. His mind wanders and he returns. The predictions are still there when he finishes; he has practised choosing an activity alongside worry rather than waiting until he feels ready.

Keep in mind

Do not practise during driving, crossing roads or any task needing undivided safety attention. This is not a way to ignore an urgent problem or medical symptoms. Stop or change the exercise if it increases distress or disconnection, and discuss this with your therapist if needed.

Review your learning

Could I return to what I was doing, even with some worry present?

Sources informing the approach

NICE (2011, updated 2020). Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder in adults: management. CG113.

Centre for Clinical Interventions. Worry and rumination: overview of attention practice within CBT self-help.

Original educational material, not a validated measure or a replacement for individual care. Sources do not endorse this worksheet.

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