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

e.g. I can act without settling every uncertainty.

If I notice...	A small response I can use	Support / when to review
e.g. Repeated inbox checks.	e.g. Return to one practical step.	e.g. Sunday review; therapy if needed.

Helpful habits to keep

e.g. Useful action and time with others.

Support / when to ask for help

e.g. Contact my therapist if daily life becomes harder or this plan is not enough.

Review date / reminder

e.g. Review next month and after a change in circumstances.

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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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