

Coping with worries: Active distraction



It is not unusual to worry about a range of issues following a thrombosis: why did it occur, what about my future and so on. However sometimes these worries may become too frequent or too intrusive in our daily lives. If this is true of you then you may find this leaflet helpful.



Make a worry time

It may seem odd that the first way of reducing worries involves making time to think about them. This is because our worries often reflect concerns that need to be addressed. If this is the case the key is not to try and forget about them entirely but to choose and limit the time in which you do think about them - and to distract away from them at all other times.



If you know you are going to address your worries at a time of your choice it gives you permission to stop thinking about them at other times of the day. This worry time can be as short or long a time as necessary but you need to identify a time and a time limit and try to stick to it.



If worries occur at any other time of the day they can be postponed until this time. If you are concerned you may forget the issue then write a reminder to yourself and then let go of the worry.

Distracting from worries

Once you have set a worry time you can use simple distraction techniques to stop worries being the focus of your attention at all other times. Distraction does not mean trying not to think about an issue or worry - it means **consciously** and **deliberately** focusing on something (anything!) other than the worry. What you think about is not particularly important. The most important thing is that you think about it **immediately** the worry comes to mind and that this distraction becomes the full focus of your attention.



Things you can think



Counting backwards in 3s from 47 while imagining the numbers in your head



Thinking of a calm or favourite place



Thinking of a holiday or other enjoyable times or places



Things you can do



Talking to someone about anything other than the worry on your mind



Absorb yourself in something interesting or fun to do



Watch a film or read a book but be careful to really focus on the plot not simply to do this while actually focusing on your worries

The key to all these strategies is to focus on the distractor. This may mean you do things slightly differently to normal. For example, if you are reading a book or articles online don't skim-read. Focus on each word of each sentence until you are absorbed in the content.

Finding what works for you



Different strategies work for different people and at different times of the day - keeping busy may be more helpful in the day, thinking of a favourite place or listening to an audiobook may be more helpful at night. The important thing is to find one or more strategies that work for you.

It may be worth spending a few minutes thinking through what may work for you. Your ideas may be as sensible or crazy as you like - no one else need know what you are doing or thinking.

On the other side of this leaflet you will find space to jot down some strategies that might work for you. It's worth thinking of a few strategies you can use - perhaps with separate one for worries during the day and those at night - so you can try them all out and find the one that works for you.

Your distraction strategies diary

My distraction strategies in the day will be:

My distraction strategies in the night will be:



Once you have planned your distraction techniques, try to use them every time a worry comes to mind.



You may not be successful every time but keep trying.



The more you use them, the easier you will find it to use them, and you will also find that any worrisome thoughts come to mind less frequently.

This information sheet has kindly been developed by Professor Paul Bennett and Dr Rachael Hunter, Swansea University