

# Understanding & Overcoming Our Worries

A 45-minute session for primary school students aged 8-12 years.



## Objectives

- Defining and describing worry so that we can recognise it.
- Increasing the knowledge of different strategies to manage worry.
- Practicing early intervention strategies that support mental health when experiencing worry.

## Resources

- **Activity 1 Teachers Resource:** What is Worry?
- **Activity 2 Worksheet:** Ideas for Managing Worry
- **Activity 3 Instructions:** Worry Jar
- **Additional Teachers Resource:** Circle of Control
- Texta's
- Post-it Notes
- Large jar (can be recycled jar), box or container.

## Session Times    Session Activity

10 minutes

### Activity 1 - What is Worry?

**Step 1:** Ask young people what they think of when they think of worry - 'What is Worry?', or read the description on the 'What is Worry and Ideas for Managing Worry' Activity Sheet.

**Step 2:** Ask the young people what are things that people often worry about? This normalises worry without going too deeply into the individual circumstances of each young person.

## Resources

**Activity 1 Teachers Resource:** What is Worry?

Session Times	Session Activity	Resources
15 minutes	<p><b>Activity 2 - Ideas for Managing Worry</b></p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Hand out the second page of 'What is Worry and Ideas for Managing Worry' to each young person. Ask the young carers to circle all the strategies they currently use to manage worry. Ask them to use another colour texta to also circle at least one other strategy that they have either not heard of or would like to learn more about or try.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> As a group spend time allowing each young carer to share their strategy and something they would like to try (optional to share) with the rest of the group. Place emphasis on the fact that each person will have their own ways to manage their worries that works for them and that's okay. The aim of reflecting on practicing our ways to manage our worries, is to build a library of tools so that if one tool doesn't work one day, we can use another tool in our toolbox.</p>	<p><b>Activity 2</b></p> <p><b>Worksheet:</b> Ideas for Managing Worry</p> <p>Texta's</p>
10 minutes	<p><b>Activity 3 - Naming and Pressing Pause on Our Worries</b></p> <p>Prior to beginning this activity, you may want to decorate and write "Worry Jar" on a recycled jar or allow students to decorate their own jars, boxes or containers.</p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Read the instructions for the 'The Worry Jar' activity and give each young carer at least 5 post-it notes.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Ask the young carers to individually reflect and write down any of their worries on the post it note.</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Once they have written down their worries, the young carers can now scrunch up and place away their worries in the jar. Explain that this is a useful tool to get worrying thoughts out of our head and placing/ pausing their worries, so their mind doesn't have to hold onto them all.</p>	<p><b>Activity 3</b></p> <p><b>Instructions:</b></p> <p>Worry Jar</p> <p>Texta's</p> <p>Post-It Notes</p> <p>Jar</p>
5 minutes	<p><b>Activity 4 - Mindfulness</b></p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Choose an activity from the 'Ideas for Managing Worry' Worksheet that young people are wanting to try. Have a particular one planned, or choose one that several young people are wanting to try and let them know there will be opportunities to try other ideas in the future.</p> <p><b>Step 2 (optional):</b> You can try a quick introduction to Mindfulness such as 'Silently spot 5 things around the room or area that are orange'. Or students can share and/or name 5 things they can see, 4 things they can touch, 3 that they can hear, 2 that they can smell and 1 that they can taste, with no pressure if they cannot get all of them, it is just an activity in giving the brain a rest from other things.</p>	

## Activity 1 - What is worry?

### Instructions and Discussion



Worry is when you feel concerned about something in the future. People may worry about school work, something their friend said and what it means, their health or that of those around them, money or lots of other things!

It is normal to worry and sometimes worry can even be positive in that it motivates us to make a plan or problem solve. For example, if we are worried about a test at school, we may decide to ask someone for help, or do extra practice and improve the outcome. If you are worried about what a friend said, you might practice conflict resolution or communication skills to improve the relationship!

**Often though, our worries are about things that we don't have control over, and it can be helpful to remind ourselves of that and give our mind a rest from thinking worries.**

Worries are often compared to a heavy bucket of water, you cannot carry it around endlessly without a break. If you put the water down often to rest though, you are able to pick it up and keep carrying it. It can be similar with worries.





## Activity 2 - Ideas for Managing Worry

### Worksheet

Everyone does something different to pass the time, relax, have time out or distract themselves from worries. The way someone manages worry may also depend on how much energy they have at the time and if they feel like being alone or with other people.

Which of the following ideas have you used or are likely to?

**Tick 3 you have used and circle 3 that you would like to try or do more of.**

Stretch or do some yoga poses.	Journal, write down anything that comes to mind.	Set aside 'worry time' 10-15 minutes a day, and then try to leave it there.	Create a plan or solve a problem.	Make a cup of tea, hot chocolate or milo.
Breath in, counting to 4, then breath out, counting to 6. Repeat 4 times.	Make a healthy meal or snack.	Draw or colour-in.	Choreograph a dance.	Chat to a supportive friend.
Play some sport.	Read something.	Go for a walk.	Spend time outside.	Play some uplifting music.
Sing your favourite song.	Think of a colour, then see if you can spot 5 things of that colour. Try again with another colour.	Chat to a trusted adult.	Write a letter to someone expressing your thoughts or feelings (you don't have to send it!)	Think of 3 good things from the day or the week- big or small!
Complete a 'Circle of Control' activity so that you can focus on the bits that are in your control.	Write down worries on a piece of paper and then put them in a jar or box to 'put them away' for now, while you take a break.			



## You will need



Your child may be worrying about a lot of things right now. Health, school, friends, family and more. They might ask you about their worries.

A Worry Jar is a place for your child to put their worries so they don't have to think about them all the time.

Find a jar or any container, and decorate it if you like. If you haven't got a spare jar, you can write or draw on the picture on the following page.

Help your child write their worries on pieces of paper. Fold them up and put them in the jar, and close the jar.

Choose 10-15 minutes a day (but not right before bed) for 'Worry Time'. Children can open the Worry Jar, look inside and worry as much as they want. They can read all the worries or focus on one or two. Have a timer to show that Worry Time is over. Close the jar to put their worries away.

At some point, your child may tell you that they've stopped worrying about something they've put in the jar, and they can tear up that worry and throw it away. Enjoy these times together!

**Remember to discuss coping strategies with your child for the worries using the Golden Rules. You can use the 'Ways to Feel Better' sheet for ideas.**

### Golden Rules for Choosing a Good Solution

It makes me feel better



It doesn't hurt me or anyone else



# Circle of Control

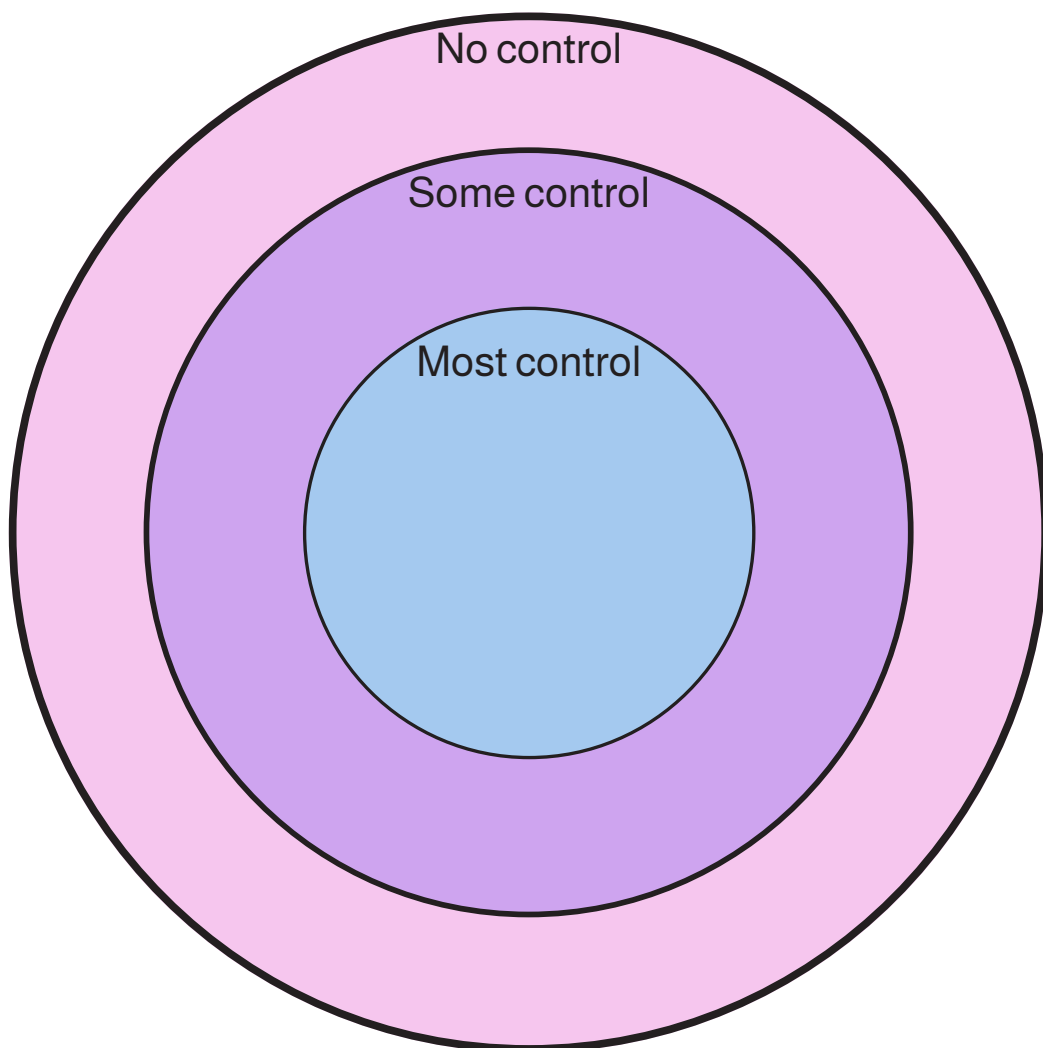
During difficult times, it can help to take big stressors and break them down into what you can control and what you can't.

Think about what's stressing you out. **In the outer ring, write the things that you have zero (or very little) control over.**

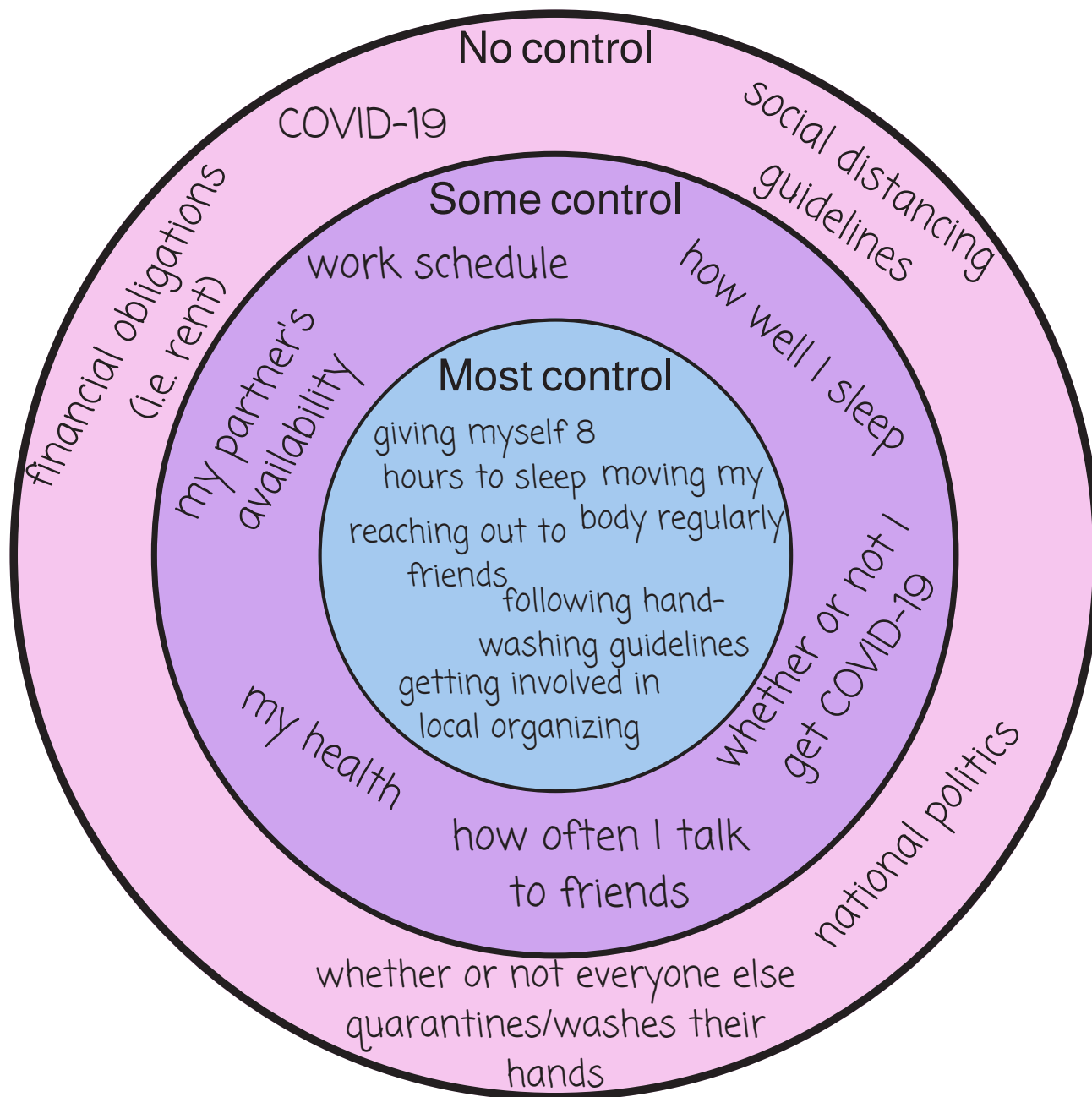
**In the middle ring, write the things that you can influence, but not entirely control.**

**In the inner ring, write the things that you can mostly or entirely control.**

**If you're unsure how to start, see the example on the next page!**



**Example:**



## Now what?

You can use these prompts to think more about your Circle of Control and how to use it to manage stress and anxiety.

- 1. What was your experience with filling out the circles? What came up for you?**
- 2. Do any of your circles have noticeably more or fewer items in them than the others? Which were easiest to think of answers for?**
- 3. Which circles do you tend to think about the most when you're feeling worried?**
- 4. Look at your "No control" and "Some control" items. Can any of them be broken down into smaller pieces that might go further in?** (For instance, you can't control social distancing guidelines, but you can probably control how you choose to implement them.)
- 5. Look at your "Some control" and "Most control" items. Should any of them be broken down into smaller pieces that might go further out?** It's important not to expect yourself to control things that aren't actually totally under your control.
- 6. How would it feel to take some concrete steps with your "Most control" items? Try breaking them down into smaller steps to help motivate yourself.**

**There's another blank set of circles on the next page if you'd like to try the exercise again!**



