

Stay Calm

Maintaining your skills



Welcome to the final session of Calm Distress. This workbook will help you to think about the course as a whole and how to use the skills you have learned to manage your distress cycle.

What have I learned so far?

Below is a brief summary of the sessions that have been covered, with the main points and tips. Please refer back to specific sessions for further detail.

Session	Main points to remember	Helpful coping to try out
Calm before the Storm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have emotions for a reason • Stress can be helpful • Distress can be controlled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the CBT model will increase your awareness and give you control over how you respond to your distress
Calm Thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unhelpful thinking styles are common • Worrying & ruminating are not helpful ways of coping in the long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow down and stand back • Challenge your thoughts • Worry time
Calm Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fight/flight system can be helpful to keep us safe from danger • Fight/flight system can be much less helpful when triggered by emotional distress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular breathing • Progressive Muscular Relaxation • Maintaining an overall healthy lifestyle
Calm Behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance, withdrawing and using safety behaviours feel useful in the short term. However, they do not help distress and can actually make it worse in the long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure • Activity Monitoring • Behavioural Activation

What can I expect going forward?

By watching the Calm Distress videos and reading through the workbooks, you are already on your way to improving your psychological wellbeing. Well done!



So what now?

A really helpful next step is to ask yourself how the information applies to **you**. In other words, what does your CBT cycle look like? The following questions might be helpful to consider.

- When you are stressed, what changes do you notice happening in your thoughts, feelings, behaviour and physical symptoms?
- What changes in any of these signal that you might be tipping from stress into distress?
- Do you get stuck in unhelpful thinking styles and trapped in patterns of repetitive worry about the future, or ruminating over the past?
- Do you notice yourself avoiding or withdrawing more?
- Do your activity levels start to suffer?
- What changes do you notice in your body?
- How do you feel when all of this is happening? Anxious, panicky, low in mood?
- What situations tend to trigger you off? Family stresses, health issues, general life stresses, uncertainty, change?

How am I going to maintain all my new skills and avoid getting stuck in my unhelpful patterns of coping?

Three really helpful approaches that you can use to maintain your new skills are setting intentions, developing SMART goals and creating a toolbox.

➤ What are my intentions?

In supporting ourselves to make positive changes it can be helpful to consider our intentions moving forward. Intentions are aims to guide our actions. They can help us focus on what we are aiming to do in the here and now, help us towards where we want to be, and help us achieve our goals. Intentions are like the seeds we sow: we plant them today and believe in tomorrow.

Examples include:

“Today I will do what I can, rather than what my mind tells me I should or must”

“I intend to be kind to myself and those around me”



➤ What are SMART goals and how can I use them?

When thinking about making any changes it is important that these are realistic for us. We can use SMART goals to help ensure we are not expecting too much of ourselves. They also help to keep us motivated and recognise our achievements.

S pecific	Be clear in what you want to achieve. Break the goal down into smaller steps.
M easurable	How will you know you have achieved your goal? Make sure you can measure it.
A chievable	Don't set your goals too high.
R ealistic	Can I achieve it with the resources and skills I have?
T imely	Set a realistic time limit.

For someone who doesn't exercise much, is it **SMART** to set a goal to run a marathon next week? What is the likelihood of achieving this? Is it realistic, achievable or timely? You would need to gradually work up to this. So, the first step may be researching running shoes, then buy running shoes, followed by starting short walks/runs and then working up to longer distances over time.

The table below provides some examples of how our intentions can be linked to SMART goals.

If my intention is to...	Then a SMART goal could be...
Get fit	Run 5k in 3 months
Reconnect with friends	Message my friends and arrange a get-together in the next month
To find a better balance between working and childcare	To make an appointment with my boss to discuss this, during the next two weeks

What goals do you think would get you closer to where you want to be? What is important to you?

Below is some space to make a note of your SMART goals going forward:



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Remember your toolbox

Calm Distress has covered many skills that can be helpful in many situations. However, remembering everything can be a challenge in itself! We have aimed to create a ‘toolbox’ of strategies that you can dip in and out of. We can all use certain strategies in certain situations, and having them easily accessible is important.

The following list may be helpful in remembering your toolbox:

- Make a list of helpful strategies and put it on your fridge or on your phone (somewhere that you will see it).
- Create an actual toolbox (maybe using a folder or old shoebox) and put your Calm Distress worksheets in it along with pictures, images or inspirational quotes for motivation.
- Watch the Calm Distress videos or read the workbooks again: they are designed to be revisited any time.

What about dealing with uncertain times?

Every day of our lives, we all accept a level of uncertainty and risk, whether we’re aware of it or not: even just walking across the road! What would life be like with 100% certainty and never taking any risks? What would this be like for watching sport or buying a lottery ticket? Sometimes a bit of uncertainty is a good thing! Can we embrace uncertainty? It is true that life is bringing with it a lot of uncertainty right now, and there are things we cannot control no matter how much we might want to. Accepting uncertainty does not mean we have to view what is happening as OK, but that we recognise that this is how things are in this moment. Combining this with some of the other Calm Distress strategies – for instance noticing our thoughts, making plans to do something we enjoy, and living by our values – can be very powerful.

Going Forward and Staying Calm

Making changes to calm our distress can take time, and it would be unrealistic to expect the strategies we put in place to work straight away. Give yourself time, reward yourself for your progress, and try not to beat yourself up on the days it doesn't quite go to plan. This will happen sometimes and is very normal. It may be that sometimes we feel we go back a few steps – but you have the tools to support yourself to get back on track, and it is also OK to ask for some help if you need it.

Take time to get to know your own distress cycle, don't avoid it, and practise using your skills to respond to your distress. Recognise your achievements! There will always be a level of uncertainty in this life of ours, but there are many things we can do to help ourselves live it in more happy and meaningful ways.

**Stay curious, keep getting to know yourself and your distress ...
and above all be kind to yourself.**

