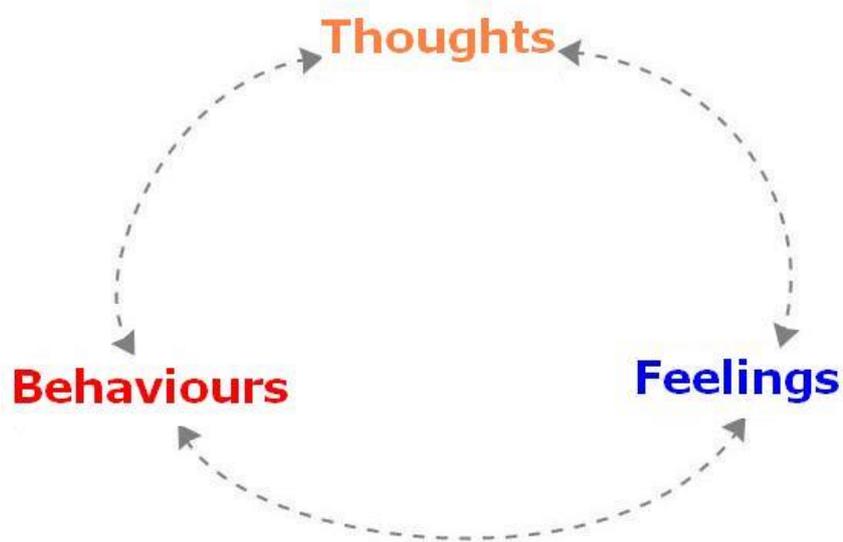


An Introductory
Self-Help Course
in
Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Step Two



www.get.gg

www.getselfhelp.co.uk



Carol Vivyan

2009-2013

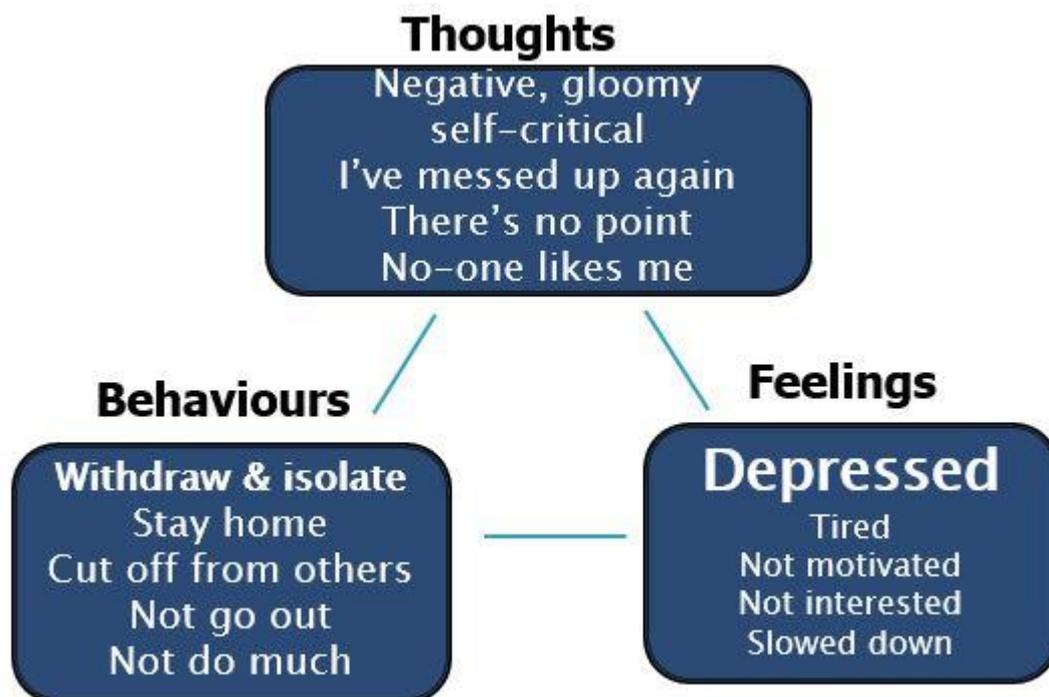
Step 2

Understanding the Links between Thoughts, Feelings & Behaviours

So far, we have looked at vicious cycles and learned how thoughts, feelings and behaviours are linked and each one affects the others.

If we use the depression example from that page, we see that on waking in the morning, 'Dave' had thoughts that included "There's no point", and "I'll only mess up again". If we think those thoughts and believe them, there is every chance that we are going to feel depressed. If we think those thoughts and feel depressed, then it's likely that we would be sorely tempted to pull the covers over our head and stay in bed.

How does doing that affect the way Dave feels and thinks? Hmm. Staying in bed might mean that his thoughts get carried away and he continues to think that way, making him feel even worse, and even more likely to stay in bed. A vicious cycle.



Depression



Depression can happen to anyone - and does happen to one in four of us over our lifetimes. Different factors that make it more likely to happen, include biological make-up, upbringing, or reaction to life events. What keeps it going though, is how we deal with those things. The way we think and what we do affects the way we feel.

Depression is often accompanied by other feelings such as guilt, shame, anger and anxiety.

Thoughts that occur in Depression

People who are depressed tend to think very negatively about themselves, the future and the world around them. It can be like seeing life through "gloomy specs".

- Everything is hopeless - nothing can change
- I'm useless, worthless
- It's all my fault
- The world is a terrible place - everything goes wrong



We can dwell on these thoughts repeatedly, mulling over things, asking ourselves why, thinking regretful things about the past, what we should or shouldn't have done.

Physical Sensations & Depression

- Tiredness, fatigue, lethargy
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Sleep changes (sleep more or less)
- Eating changes (eat more or less)
- Lose interest in hobbies, activities, sex



Behaviours & Depression

Because of the tiredness, difficulty sleeping and eating, and negative style of thinking, we tend to do less and less. We stop doing the things we used to do and enjoy. It could get so bad that we can't even go to work, or do things at home. We want to stay in bed, or stay at home doing very little. We might isolate ourselves from friends and family.

Anxiety



Anxiety is the body's way of responding to being in danger. Adrenaline is rushed into our bloodstream to enable us to run away or fight. This happens whether the danger is real, or whether we believe the danger is there when actually there is none. It is the body's alarm and survival mechanism. Primitive man wouldn't have survived for long without this life-saving response. It works so well, that it often kicks in when it's not needed - when the danger is in our heads rather than in reality. We think we're in danger, so that's enough to trigger the system to go, go, go! People who get anxious tend to get into scanning mode - where they're constantly on the lookout for danger, hyper-alert to any of the signals, and make it more likely that the alarm system will be activated.

Thoughts that often occur in Anxiety include our overestimating or exaggerating the actual threat, and underestimating or minimising our ability to cope:

- I'm in danger right now
- The worst possible scenario is going to happen
- I won't be able to cope with it



Physical Sensations - The Adrenaline Response

When there is real, or we believe there is a real, threat or danger, our bodies' automatic survival mechanism kicks in very quickly. This helps energise us to fight or run away ('fight or flight response'). We will notice lots of physical sensations, which might include:

- **Heart racing** - This helps to take the blood to where it is most needed – his legs so that he can run faster (flight); his arms so that he can hit out (FIGHT); his lungs to increase his stamina. At the same time blood is taken from the places it is not needed for example fingers, toes and skin. These changes cause tingling coldness and numbness.
- **Breathing gets faster** - This helps the bloodstream to carry oxygen to the arms, legs and lungs. This will give him more power. The side effects may include chest pain, breathlessness and a choking feeling. As there is a slight drop in the blood and oxygen being sent to the brain he may feel dizzy or light headed, he may experience blurred vision.
- **Muscles tense and prepare** - The large skeletal muscles tense and create power, this may cause pain, aching and shaking.
- **Sweating** - Sweating helps to cool the muscles and the body. It helps to stop them from overheating. Sweating can also make us more slippery to our enemies!
- **Pupils dilate** - This lets more light into his eyes so his overall vision improves. Side effects may include sensitivity to light or spots before his eyes.
- **Digestive system slows down** - These are not important while in danger and so are slowed down then the saved energy goes to where it is most needed. Side effects may include nausea, butterflies and a dry mouth.
- **More alert** - He will be concentrating on looking for danger, much less able to concentrate on anything else. He will be waiting for something to happen. This is the basis of the way we worry.

Behaviours might include:

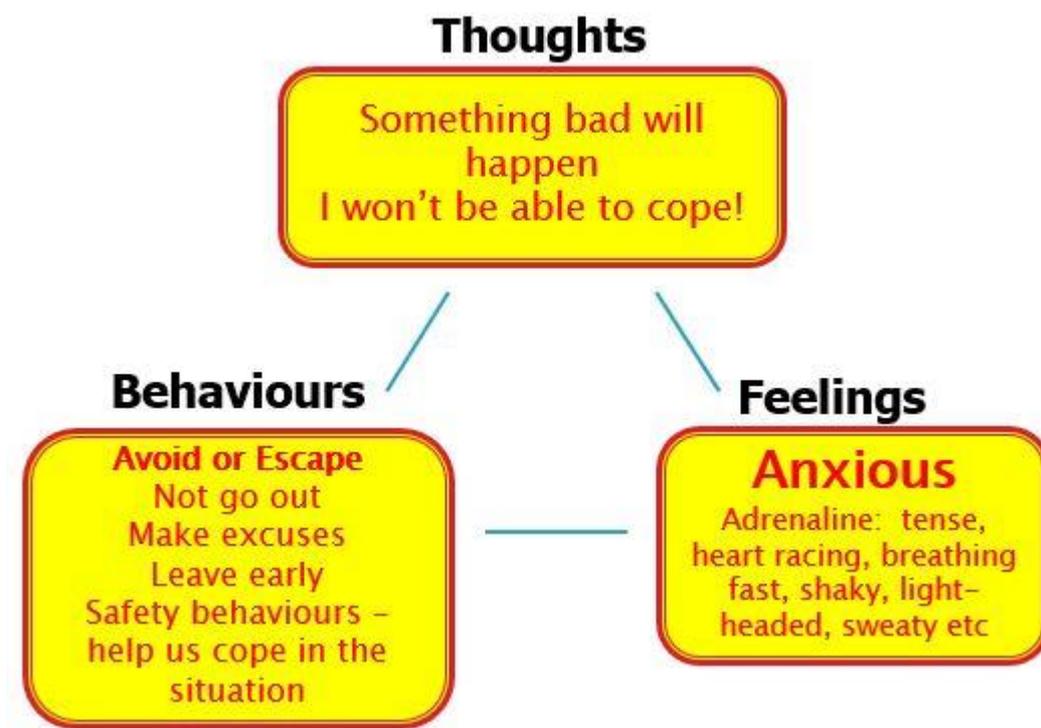
- Avoiding people or places
- Not going out
- Going to certain places at certain times, e.g. shopping at smaller shops, at less busy times
- Only going with someone else
- Escape, leave early
- Go to the feared situation, but use coping behaviours to get you through: examples include: self talk, holding a drink, smoking more, fiddling with clothes or handbag, avoiding eye contact with others, having an escape plan, medication. These are called 'safety behaviours'.



Safety behaviours can also help to keep your anxiety going. Whilst you depend on them to help you cope, you don't get to find out that without them, the anxiety would reduce and go away on its own.

Whilst avoiding people or situations might help you feel better at that time, it doesn't make your anxiety any better over a longer period. If you're frightened that your anxiety will make you pass out or vomit in the supermarket aisle, you won't find out that won't actually happen, because you don't go. So the belief that it will happen remains, along with the anxiety.

Vicious Cycle of Anxiety



We all feel anxious some times. A certain amount of anxiety helps us to be more alert and focused. For example just prior to an exam, a few exam nerves have a positive effect - motivating us, helping us focus our thoughts on the job in hand, making us more alert. Too much anxiety, or constantly being anxious, is unhealthy and detrimental to our lives and relationships.

Anger



What is Anger?

Anger is a result of thinking that we have been unfairly treated or disrespected, or that others have broken or fallen short of our rules, standards or expectations, and we won't stand for it.

Thinking this way leads us to feel angry, which stimulates the body's adrenaline response which is our body's way of helping us to cope with either fighting, or running away ('fight or flight' response). We respond to those thoughts and feelings, by acting, or feeling an urge to act, in threatening or aggressive ways.

Thoughts that often occur:

- I'm being treated unfairly
- I'm being disrespected
- They're breaking a rule or standard
- I won't stand for it



Physical Sensations - The Adrenaline Response

When there is real, or we believe there is a real, threat or danger, or we believe we need to defend or stand up for what we believe, our bodies' automatic survival mechanism kicks in very quickly. This helps energise us to fight or run away ('fight or flight response'). We will notice lots of physical sensations, which might include:

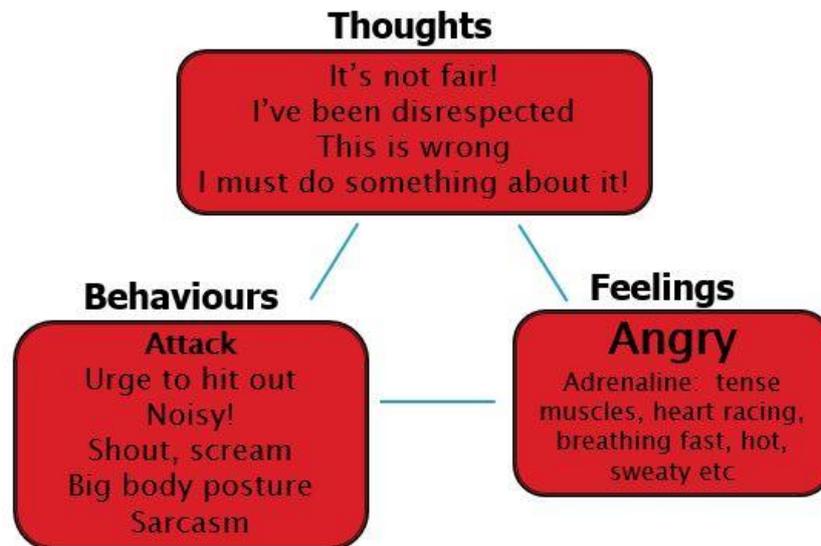
- heart racing or pounding - enabling good blood supply around our bodies
- breathing quickly - allowing more oxygen around the body
- tense muscles - a state of readiness to fight or flee
- shaking
- hot, sweating
- light-headed
- stomach churning or butterflies
- fist or teeth clenching

Behaviours might include:

- staring & angry facial expression
- aggressive body posture
- attacking
- hitting out (or urge to hit out)
- arguing
- shouting or snapping at others
- running or storming away
- staying silent (maybe inwardly seething)
- sulking



The Angry Cycle



We all feel angry some times. Some people tend to become angry easily (a "short fuse"), and some have problems controlling their anger. Anger has consequences, and they often involve hurting other people - more usually their feelings, but sometimes physically. Anger can cause problems in our personal lives, and affect work and study. After an angry outburst, we can think very critically of ourselves and our actions, leading us to feel guilty, ashamed and lower our mood, which might result in our withdrawing from others, not wanting to do anything (see depression cycle).

Summary

In CBT, we aim to break those cycles by changing something - what we think or what we do. We might start by looking at what might be easiest to change. Perhaps in this case, it might be easiest to change what we do.

How would Dave have felt if he had got up anyway, in spite of how he was feeling. Maybe ate some breakfast, had a shower, got dressed, and perhaps went out for a walk. How would that affect his depression? What would that do to the way he was thinking?

It's very likely that his mood would have improved, and that he would have started to think a little more realistically. He might have even enjoyed his day, or got a sense of achievement from having done **something**.

Have a look at what you've written down on your sheets of several examples of distressing situations (Step 1 practice). What links can you see between what **you** think and what **you** do, and how they affect the way **you** feel.

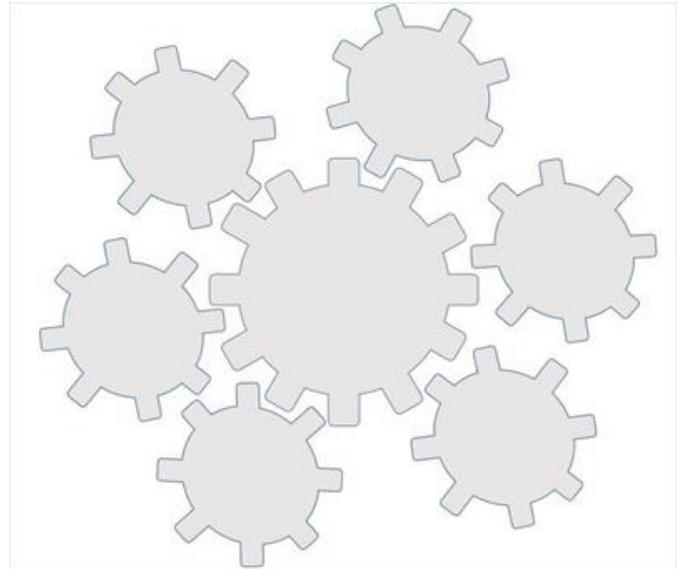
In the next step, you'll be starting to make some changes that will work for **you**.

VICIOUS COGS

In order to make effective positive change in our mental wellbeing, it is essential to look at the factors which help to keep our problem going. Once we've identified those factors, we can then target each factor and start to make positive changes.

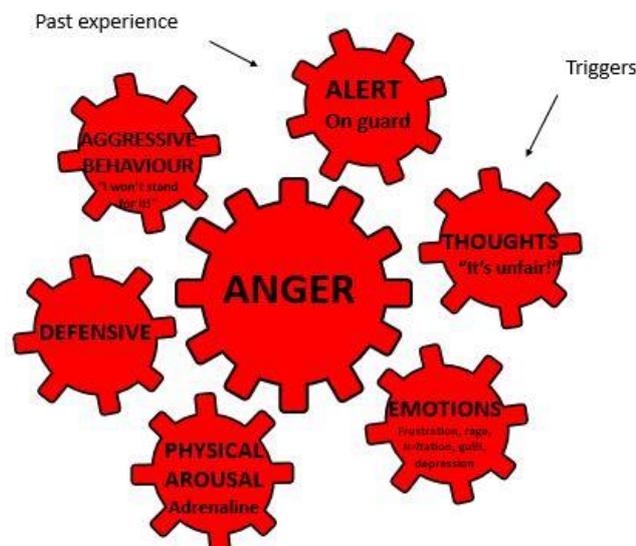
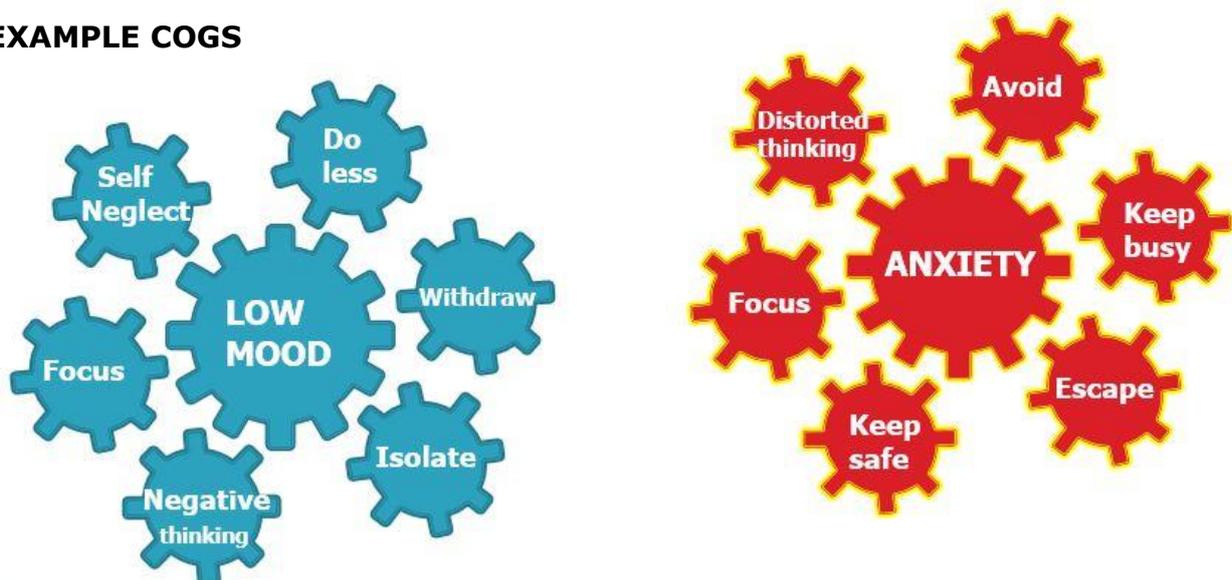
Cogs is a variation of the "vicious flower". Using the example of a simple clockwork mechanism, we can see how the smaller cogs keep the large central cog turning. If there's a problem with any of the cogs, then the whole mechanism will grind to a halt.

We can therefore use this process to help us deal with our mental health problem. If our main problem is "anxiety", then we can write "anxiety" inside the large central cog. Then we can identify each factor than helps keep the anxiety going.



In order to reduce and deal with the anxiety, we need to target and make positive helpful changes in each of those smaller cogs.

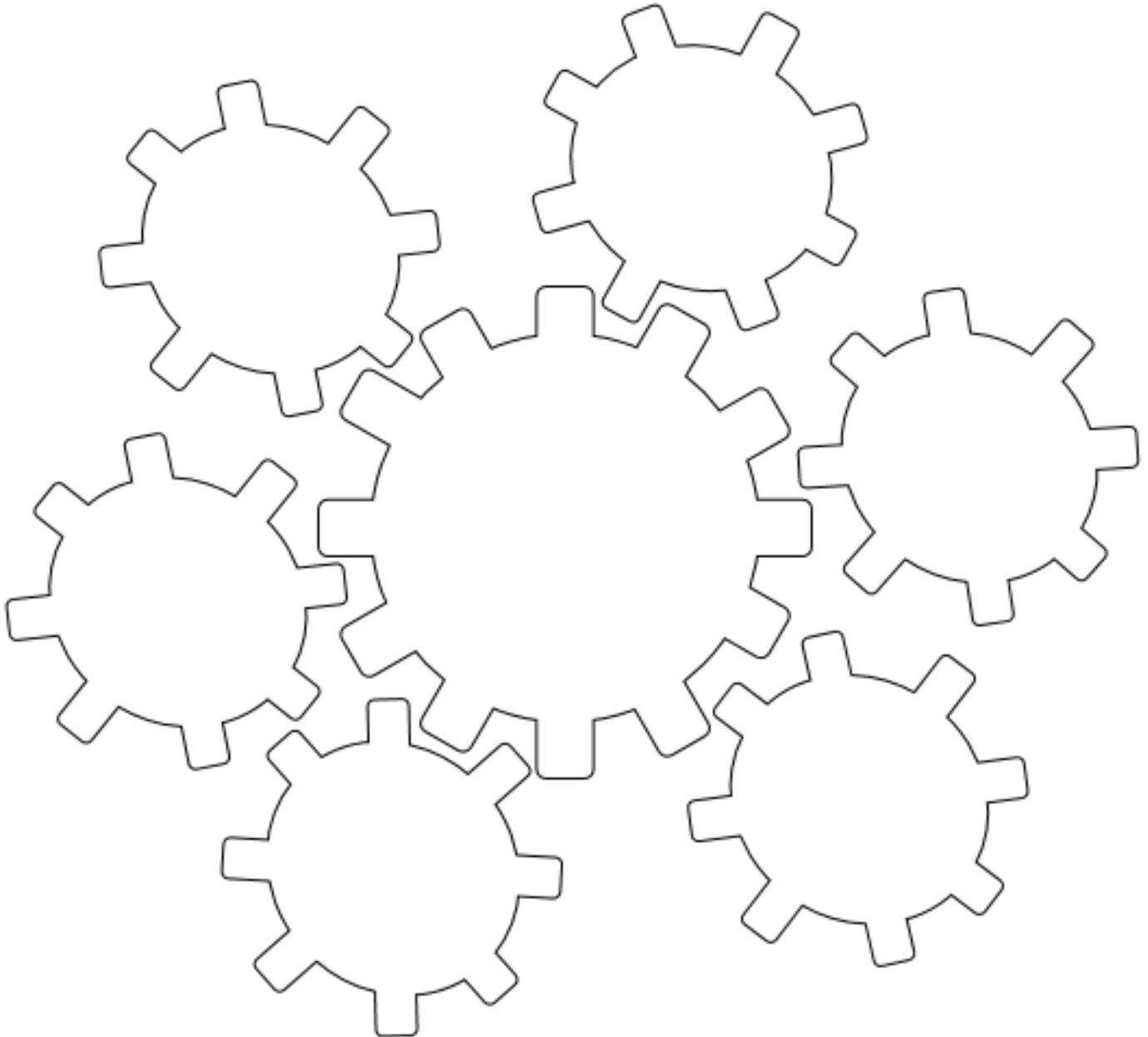
EXAMPLE COGS



VICIOUS COGS WORKSHEET

Write the name of your problem (e.g. anxiety, depression, OCD etc) in the large middle cog. You can also substitute an unhelpful belief (e.g. "I'm a failure") in the large middle cog.

Write all the factors (unhelpful things you do or unhelpful ways of thinking) in the smaller surrounding cogs.



Take each smaller cog, and identify ways of making positive changes. You can work up to these changes gradually, so it may help to write down the steps on the way to achieving your goal for each cog.

Emotions and their associated thoughts, body reactions and behaviours

Emotion	Thoughts	Body reaction	Behaviours
<p style="text-align: center;">Angry</p>  <p>frustrated, irritated, impatient, resentful, enraged, peed off, fury, insulted</p>	<p>Assume the worst Problem is enormous Others are unfair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I've been disrespected, treated unfairly, used ❖ I've been let down ❖ It's not fair! ❖ I won't stand for it 	<p>Adrenaline response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Tense ❖ Fired up ❖ Energised, breathing and heart rate increase ❖ Difficulty concentrating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fight ❖ Confront ❖ Argue ❖ Make lots of noise! ❖ Sulk ❖ Snap, swear, shout ❖ Sarcastic, patronise ❖ Put downs
<p style="text-align: center;">Anxious</p>  <p>nervous, on edge, apprehensive, scared, frightened, panicky, terrified, petrified</p>	<p>Threat: Overestimate danger Underestimate ability to cope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I'm in great danger right now ❖ The worst possible thing is going to happen ❖ I won't be able to cope with it 	<p>Adrenaline response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Tense, shaky, sweaty, hot, ❖ Energised, breathing and heart rate increase ❖ Difficulty concentrating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Avoid people or places (in order to avoid feeling anxious) ❖ Fidget ❖ Escape / run away ❖ Coping or safety behaviours
<p style="text-align: center;">Depressed</p>  <p>sad, down, despairing, hopeless, gloomy, miserable, sorrowful, unhappy, dismayed</p>	<p>Negative focus. Themes of loss, hopelessness, negative view of self</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I'm worthless ❖ Nothing's going to change ❖ I've lost.... 	<p>Slowed down or agitated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Tired, lethargic ❖ Constipated ❖ Memory & concentration problems ❖ Appetite & sleep changes ❖ Loss of interest: hobbies, sex ❖ Restlessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Do less ❖ Talk less ❖ Eat less or more ❖ Sleep less or more ❖ Isolate and withdraw ❖ Ruminates on negative thoughts

Dealing with Negative Emotions

Emotion	Body	Thinking differently	Doing differently	Imagery
<p>What emotion am I feeling?</p>  <p>What am I thinking?</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can I notice in my body? Where do I feel it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STOPP! Take a breath. www.getselfhelp.co.uk/stopp.htm What am I reacting to? What's pressing my buttons here? What does this situation mean to me or say about me? Is this fact or opinion? Where is my focus of attention? How could I see things differently? What would I say to someone else in this situation? How important is this? Is my reaction in proportion to the event? Take the helicopter view! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do what works! What will be the consequences of my action? What will be the most effective action? What will be best for me, for others and for this situation? Is this in keeping with my principles & values? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where do you feel this emotion in your body? If this feeling had a colour, what would it be? What shape is it? How big is it? What consistency is it? If you felt better: What colour would it be? What about the shape? The size? The consistency? Notice that feeling now.
<p>Depression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm useless, I'm worthless. Everything is hopeless 	<p>Fatigue Slowed down Do less Stay in bed/home Disinterest Can't concentrate</p>	<p>It's okay to feel sad about this situation, but I can get through it. I'm looking through those 'gloomy specs' again. This doesn't mean I'm a worthless person. What would be a more helpful way of looking at things? If I do something anyway – I'll feel better.</p>	<p>Do things anyway – in spite of how I'm feeling. Get up. Get out. Do something enjoyable or useful. Be with or contact others. Focus attention outside of me and my situation.</p>	<p>In your mind's eye, see yourself doing and enjoying the things you used to or would like to enjoy doing, and successfully doing what you need to do.</p> <p>Visualise orange for positive energy. Breathe in orange, and breathe out blue/black.</p>
<p>Anxiety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Something bad is going to happen. I won't be able to cope 	<p>Adrenaline response – Body's alarm system. Energised for fight or flight</p>	<p>Is this threat a real one or is it really bound to happen? Am I exaggerating the threat? Am I misreading things? I feel bad, but that doesn't mean things really are so bad. I can cope with these feelings, I've got through it before. What would someone else say about this? What would be a more helpful way of looking at things?</p>	<p>How will doing this affect me in the long term? Don't avoid situations – go anyway. Problem solve or make plans if necessary. Take things slowly or gradually. Focus attention outside of me – external rather than internal focus.</p>	<p>Imagine yourself coping in a situation that you feel anxious about. See the situation through to a successful completion.</p> <p>Visualise blue for calm. Breathe in blue and breathe out red.</p>
<p>Anger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's not fair. Others are bad. I won't stand for it. 	<p>Adrenaline response – Body's alarm system. Energised for fight or flight</p>	<p>What am I reacting to? What's pressing my buttons? Am I over-reacting? Is my reaction in proportion to the actual event? How important is this? I feel like I'm being unfairly treated, but maybe they didn't mean it that way. Am I misreading things? What's the best thing to do here?</p>	<p>Take a breath. Do the best thing – best for me, for others and for the situation. Walk away? When feeling calm, if still appropriate, do something about it in a calm, non-aggressive but assertive way.</p>	<p>Visualise yourself handling this situation in a calm, non-aggressive but assertive way, respecting the rights and opinions of everyone involved.</p> <p>Visualise blue for calm, or green for balance. Breathe in green/blue & breathe out red.</p>

If you have a problem other than depression, anxiety or anger, then you can read the information given in these information sheets, as part of **Step Two**, and then continue the course:

- Stress get.gg/docs/StressSelfHelp.pdf
- Low self-esteem get.gg/docs/SelfEsteem.pdf
- Chronic pain / fatigue get.gg/docs/Pain&Fatigue.pdf
- Paranoia, Delusions &/or voices get.gg/docs/PsychosisSelfHelp.pdf
- Substance misuse get.gg/docs/SubstanceMisuse.pdf
- Bulimia or binge eating get.gg/docs/BulimiaSelfHelp.pdf
- Anorexia get.gg/docs/AnorexiaSelfHelp.pdf
- Bipolar Mood Management get.gg/docs/BipolarMoodManagement.pdf

The Depression, Anxiety and Anger self help guides are also available separately:

- Depression Self Help get.gg/docs/DepressionSelfHelp.pdf
- Anxiety Self Help get.gg/docs/AnxietySelfHelp.pdf
- Anger Self Help get.gg/docs/anger.pdf

You can also use the Anxiety disorder specific self help guides:

- GAD (Generalised Anxiety Disorder) get.gg/docs/GADselfhelp.pdf
- Panic get.gg/docs/PanicSelfHelp.pdf
- Health Anxiety get.gg/docs/HealthAnxietySelfHelp.pdf
- OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) get.gg/docs/OCDselfhelp.pdf
- PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) get.gg/docs/PTSDselfhelp.pdf
- Social Anxiety get.gg/docs/SocialAnxietySelfHelp.pdf
- Phobias get.gg/docs/PhobiasSelfHelp.pdf

In Step 3 we will look more closely at breaking the vicious cycles by targeting the behaviours associated with particular problems. We will learn how to choose healthy alternative behaviours which will have a positive impact on how we think and feel. Now the work REALLY begins!