



Getting Started with Guided Self Help



About this booklet

This booklet aims to tell you everything you need to know to feel prepared for your Guided Self-Help treatment with us at italk.

If you have access to the internet you can also find individual worksheets in the patient area of our website:

www.italk.org.uk/patient-area

Looking after yourself

Thinking about our mental health can bring up difficult emotions, so as you work through this booklet please treat yourself with the kindness you'd show a friend.

We're included a page of self-care tips at the end of this booklet, and a list of other organisations you may find helpful.

If you need to talk at any time, Samaritans are a listening ear for whatever you're going through. Call 116 123 any time of day or night.

If you feel unsafe call your GP or 111 straight away.

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What does 'Guided Self Help' help with?

Guided Self-Help is a treatment proven to help with symptoms of anxiety and depression.

At italk, we focus on symptoms rather than the diagnosis because depression and anxiety can affect everyone slightly differently.

By focusing on the symptoms you're experiencing, we can tailor your treatment to you.

Below, we've listed a few of the most common symptoms. Some people will experience symptoms from just one side of the list, and others will experience a combination of both.

Depression

- Little interest in doing things
- Feeling down or hopeless
- Trouble with sleep
- Changes in appetite
- Trouble concentrating
- Moving or speaking slowly
- Feeling unsettled or fidgety

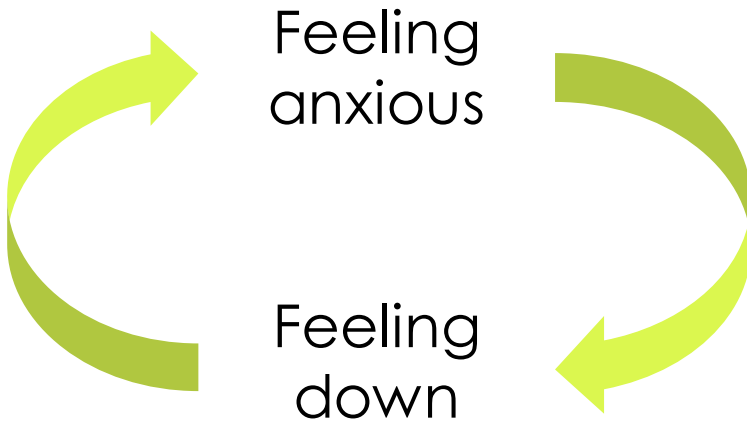
Anxiety

- Having trouble relaxing
- Feeling afraid or like something bad might happen
- Feeling nervous
- Worrying a lot
- Becoming easily annoyed
- Feeling restless

Depression and anxiety can sometimes be two sides of the same coin.

For example, feeling panicky or on edge can be exhausting, and that tiredness can make us feel low in mood.

Similarly, symptoms of depression can make us feel anxious, for example we might worry things won't get better.



But although these symptoms affect us all differently, you're not alone.

1 in 6 people are experiencing symptoms of anxiety or depression at this moment.

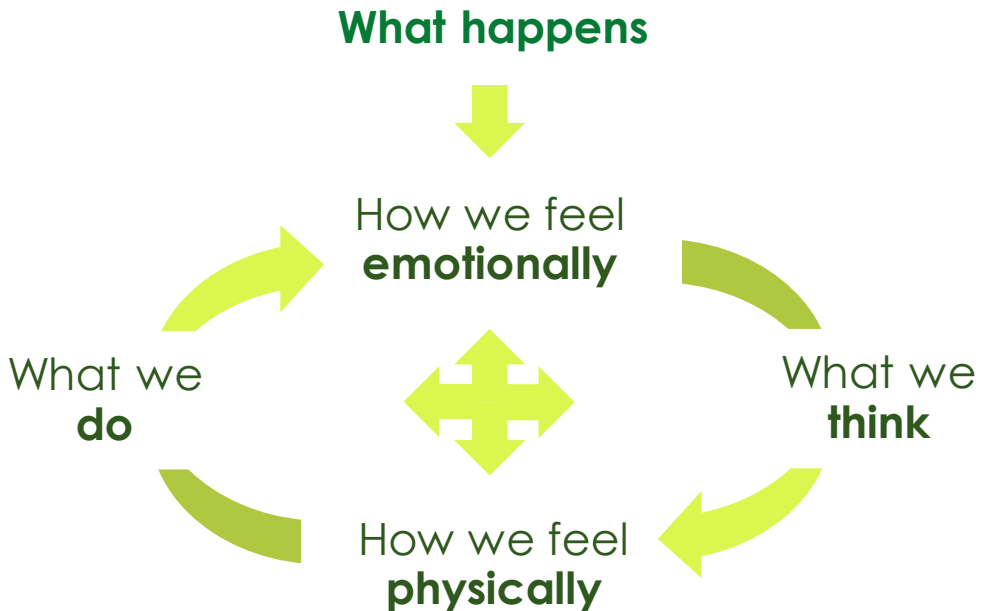
They arise from natural patterns of human behaviour that become 'vicious cycles'. Guided Self-Help aims to help you break those cycles, and feel better.

Introducing Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Guided Self-Help is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), which looks at the links between our thoughts, emotions, physical feelings and our actions.

Because although we often hear about how anxiety and depression affect how we feel, they also affect the way we think, what we do, and cause physical symptoms in our body.

The diagram below shows how they link together. It's called the "5 Areas Model".



5 Areas

In Guided Self-Help, we use the '5 Areas' model to look at patterns in the way situations in our life affect our emotions, thoughts, physical feelings and actions.

These patterns can become 'vicious cycles' where one thing leads to another, making us feel worse and worse over time.

The '5 Areas' model helps us to understand those 'vicious cycles' and find small changes we could make to break the cycle and feel better.

We often can't change the situation, and we also can't just change our feelings (if we could, we'd all just decide to be happy!)

So in Guided Self-Help, we focus on changing what we do. We look for those small changes in our actions that can make a big difference to how we feel.

Take a look at the example on the next page, and try it out yourself to see if you can identify any 'vicious cycles' in your life.

Example

Situation: *I saw my friend in town and waved, but they walked straight past*

Emotions: *Sad, worried, anxious*

Actions:
Stay at home and worry about what I might have done
Avoid them.

Thoughts:
“Have I upset them?”
“What did I do?”
“They don’t like me”

Physical feelings:
Tearful, tense, butterflies in my stomach

What links can you see between the thoughts, emotions, physical feelings and actions in this example?

What difference could changing our actions make?

Your 5 Areas

Situation:

What happened?



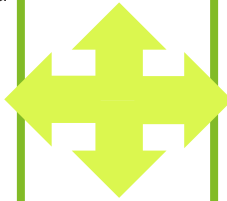
Emotions:

How did it make you feel?



Actions: What did you do afterwards?

Thoughts: What went through your mind?



Physical feelings: How did your body feel?

How does 'Guided Self Help' help?

We've looked a little bit at the symptoms of depression and anxiety, and how they can form 'vicious cycles' that keep us from feeling better. Now let's look at how Guided Self-Help can help you to break those cycles.

Setting Goals

During your Guided Self-Help sessions, you and your practitioner will work together as a team.

They will help you to set some goals that you want to work towards, and they'll suggest tools and techniques that you could use to achieve them.

Working Towards Your Goals

The key to Guided Self-Help is the time and energy you put into putting those tools and techniques into practice between your sessions.

The changes that you make in your everyday life are what makes the difference in your wellbeing.

Your practitioner will help you to reflect on and celebrate your progress.

Becoming Your Own Therapist

Through this treatment, you learn skills that you can use not just now, but any time you need them in future.


Guided Self-Help doesn't just help you, it guides you to a place where you can help yourself.

Moving Forward

What people often say after treatment is that Guided Self-Help is a little bit like learning an instrument or a sport.

You start out with lessons to learn the skills, which is your sessions with us, but the real improvement comes from how often you practice.

And once you've mastered these skills, they stay with you for life.



*“I’ve
learned really
useful tools to help
me deal with my reactions
to things and to help me
overcome feelings that might
spiral out of control”*

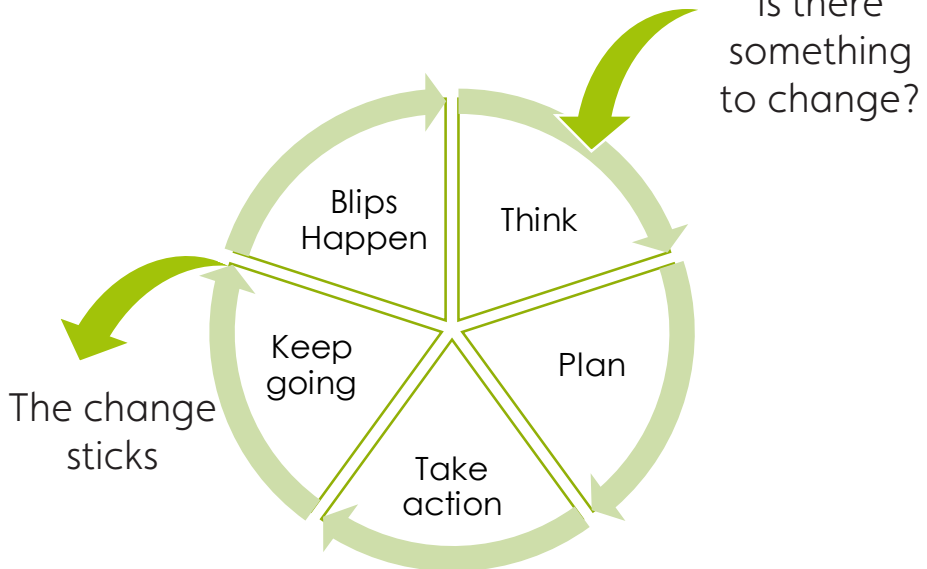
Making Changes

As Guided Self-Help works by finding small changes you can make to improve your wellbeing, it can be helpful to understand the cycle of change.

We go through this cycle whenever we make a change. Even when it's something small, like watching a new TV show, we'll go through these steps. We just might not notice it.

Think about your journey with italk so far. How many of these steps have you already taken to be reading this booklet?

The Cycle of Change



1. Is there something to change?

The first step is actually outside of the cycle. We're not really thinking about change yet, we've just started to notice things we'd like to be different.

3. Plan

We decide we definitely want to make a change, and we start to plan what we're going to do about it. At this stage people often think about seeing their GP, or ask friends and family for advice.

5. Keep going

We're likely to face barriers and hurdles, but we do our best to plan ahead for them and keep going.

7. The Change Sticks

This is the goal. Eventually the change becomes a normal part of our life.

2. Think

We enter the cycle at the point we start to think about what we want to change. People often tell us at this stage "I just wanted to feel like myself again", but weren't sure how to achieve it yet.

4. Take Action

When we're ready to take the plunge, we put our plan into action. This takes a lot of courage, and you did it when you arranged your assessment with us.

6. Blips Happen

It's rare for change to stick straight away. But each time a blip happens and we try again, we learn something. So these aren't failures or setbacks, they're part of the journey.

Setting Goals

If reading this booklet has got you thinking about the kind of changes you want to make through your Guided Self-Help treatment, this section will help you to set some goals.

Where do I start?

We'll ask you to think of one main problem to work on during your Guided Self Help sessions.

You can then set goals that will help you to tackle that main problem.

But as depression and anxiety can affect so many aspects of our life, it can be difficult to know where to start.

Try to think about the symptoms that cause you most distress, or that impact your life the most. Perhaps it's the vicious cycle you explored in your 5 Areas worksheet?

My main problem is:

Once you have an idea of your main problem, we use the SMART model to set some goals to work towards.

SMART stands for:

- **Specific:** What do you want to achieve, and what could you do to make it happen?
- **Measurable:** How will you know when you've achieved your goal? Can you see how close you got?
- **Achievable:** Is this something that's possible, and within your control?
- **Realistic:** Is it achievable for you right now, with the resources you have available?
- **Time-Based:** When will you do this, and how long for?

For example, if I want to do a bit more exercise, my SMART goal might be:

“I will walk for 30 minutes at least once a week for the next 6 weeks”

It's **specific** because I've said exactly what I will do. It's **measurable**, I can time my walk and know when I've reached my goal. I made it **achievable** by choosing walking, which I can do any day and in any weather. I've made it **realistic** to my own level of fitness, and I've made it **time-based** so that I can review it in 6 weeks.

During your first Guided Self-Help session, you and your practitioner will talk about what your main problem might be, and start to set some goals.

But if you would like to take some time before your treatment starts to think about these, you can use the space below to set your first 3 SMART goals.

My Goals:

1

2

3

How will my practitioner help?

So far in this booklet, we've talked about what you'll be doing during your Guided Self-Help treatment. Now, let's look at what you can expect from your italk practitioner.

Your expert guide

Your practitioner will be your expert guide, and is there to support you to achieve your goals.

They won't do things for you, but they will take an active part in your treatment, so that you can work together as a team.

This means your sessions will be quite structured. You'll start by working together to set some goals, and your practitioner will teach you tools you can use towards achieving them.

Someone to talk through your progress with, and celebrate your successes

In later sessions, you'll talk about your progress and any questions you may have. Your practitioner will celebrate your achievements with you, and provide that encouragement for you to keep moving forward.

Next Steps

We hope this booklet has given you a helpful introduction to your Guided Self-Help treatment.

Between now and your first treatment session, we recommend thinking about the cycle of change on page 12.

If you feel ready to 'plan', you may find it helpful to complete these activities:

- Your own '5 Areas' on Page 9
- Thinking about your main problem on page 14
- Setting some Smart Goals to work towards tackling your main problem on page 16.

But it's OK if you're still in the thinking stage. You will work on these activities with your practitioner in your first session.

The key thing is to congratulate yourself on taking such a positive step forward.

We wish you all the best as you go into your treatment sessions.

Best wishes, The italk team

Self Care

Thinking about our mental health can bring up difficult emotions, so take time to look after yourself as you work through this booklet and start your Guided Self-Help treatment.

We've included a simple grounding technique below, and on the following pages you'll find a list of other services you may find helpful.

54321 Grounding Exercise

This exercise aims to bring your attention away from difficult memories of the past, or worries about the future, and onto your experience in the present moment.

The key isn't to stop ourselves thinking about the past or the future, but just to bring our attention back to the present. Think of your mind like a curious puppy – a puppy wants to explore, and so does your mind. But when the puppy wanders off, we don't try to hold it still – we gently guide it back to us.

So to gently guide our mind back to the present moment, we're going to go through all of our senses noticing what we can see, hear, feel, smell and taste.

Can you notice:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can feel
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Focus on each one in turn, name and describe them in your mind.

When you've finished the list, notice how you feel. Do you feel a little more relaxed?

Someone to talk to

Solent Mind Support Line

If you're feeling anxious or low and want to speak to someone, the Solent Mind Support Line offers support and ideas to help you cope.

023 8017 9049

Open: weekdays 9am - 7pm and weekends 10am - 2pm.

Samaritans

Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you.

116 123

Open: all day every day.

NHS 111

If you feel at risk of harming yourself or others, call 111 for help to stay safe.

111

Open: all day every day.

Shout

The Shout Crisis Text Line connects you with a trained volunteer to help you feel calm and safe again.

Text 'shout' to 85258

Open: all day every day.

Ways to meet others with similar experiences

Mind Wellbeing Centres

Wellbeing Centres are friendly and welcoming places with an informal atmosphere, offering you the opportunity to meet others who have had similar experiences.

Where: Call your local wellbeing service:

Solent Mind:

Winchester: 01962 859012

Eastleigh: 023 8061 1458

Hythe: 023 8084 1341

New Milton: 014 2562 0642

Andover Mind:

Andover & Romsey: 01264 332297

Basingstoke: 01256 476572

Havant and East Hants Mind:

Havant, Waterlooville, Bordon, Alton &

Petersfield: 02392 498916

Ways to learn more about mental wellbeing

Books on Prescription

Don't be fooled by the title, you don't really need a prescription for these books! They're simply a list of books recommended by health professionals and people with personal experience of mental health conditions.

Your local library

They include autobiographies of people's own experiences of mental health, self-help books and books explaining different mental health conditions and treatments.

Where: Ask at your local library

Hampshire Recovery College

Recovery Colleges offer classes and courses that aim to help you to understand and manage your mental wellbeing.

07880 00 48 28

Topics can include classes on managing your wellbeing, and courses on communication skills, assertiveness and self belief.

Italk patients can access Hampshire Recovery College free of charge for up to 2 years from your treatment with us.

Where: Online and across Hampshire

Helplines

Veterans' Gateway

A confidential helpline connecting veterans and their families with the organisations best placed to help them.

0808 802 1212

Turn2Us

Helps people in financial hardship access welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help.

0808 802 2000

The Patients' Association

Provides specialist information, advice and signposting to help patients and their families make sense of the world of health and social care.

0800 345 7115

Scope Disability Helpline

Offering free, independent and impartial information and support to disabled people and their families.

0808 800 3333

Carers UK

Information and guidance on all aspects of caring, for people who look after a family member or friend.

0808 808 7777

Campaign Against Living Miserably

A free and confidential helpline for anyone who needs to talk about life's problems.

0800 58 58 58

italk is the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service delivered in partnership between Solent Mind and Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

