

Distraction

Thinking about unpleasant things will tend to make them worse. This can cause a 'fear of fear' cycle by provoking further symptoms as well as pre-venting existing ones from disappearing.

It is difficult to turn your attention away from unpleasant feelings. To do so, two things are necessary.

- 1** Be determined not to think about or dwell on symptoms
- 2** Fill your mind with other things: Distract yourself

Distraction Techniques

Mental games: Puzzles, crosswords, word games, reciting poems, singing along to a song and counting backwards are all useful distraction exercises. The important thing is that it takes your attention away from worrying thoughts.



Environmental focus: Concentrating on a specific detail of the world around you, e.g. making words out of car number plates or watching the birds outside of your window. Focussing on the outside world can prevent thinking about what is going on inside you.

Using a bridging object: This could be a photo or souvenir from a happy time. Looking at the object can generate positive anxiety-reducing thoughts.



Distraction can be useful when you want to switch off from worrying thoughts as well as when you are out in an anxiety provoking situation.

Information provided by:

The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust