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## WEEK THREE HANDOUT: WORRY, STRESS AND MEMORY

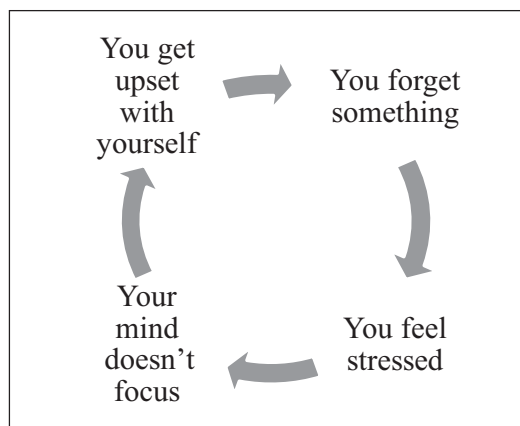
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A little bit of stress is often good for us – it can make us feel energised and focussed.

But too much stress is bad. Our bodies respond as if we are in danger or under threat:

- ⊗ Our muscles become tense
- ⊗ Our breathing rate increases
- ⊗ Our heart beats faster
- ⊗ When this happens, it is hard to concentrate or to think clearly
- ⊗ This means it is harder to remember things that happen



The vicious circle of stress and dementia (week three)

## Coping with the physical symptoms of stress

It is helpful to recognise when you are starting to get stressed and learn ways to cope with it.

If you can't remember things, try to tell yourself it doesn't matter and it will probably come back later. Getting worked up will just make it worse.

Try and distract yourself as a way of relaxing

- ✓ Listen to music
- ✓ Look at things around you and try to focus on what is happening
- ✓ Get a mental picture of a relaxing place you know such as by the sea or in a garden
- ✓ Watch birds
- ✓ Think about a pleasant memory

Often, people use alcohol as a way of relaxing – but remember that even small amounts can have a dramatic effect when your memory is already struggling.

Try to write your own list below of ways that help *you* to cope.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

## Negative thoughts

We all have negative thoughts. For example, one might be “If I have to talk to someone, then I won't be able to know what to say”. These thoughts are not always realistic and are rarely helpful. Often, worries about what other people will think of them mean that people with dementia do less and spend more time in their home. This, in turn, means that they feel



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even worse. Discussing these worries with people close to you can help you to find more positive ways of thinking, such as “If I forget a word, then people won’t mind”.

### **Relaxation exercises**

During the session, there will be the chance to practice one or more forms of relaxation together as a group. Try to find a way to continue to practice this every day at home.

