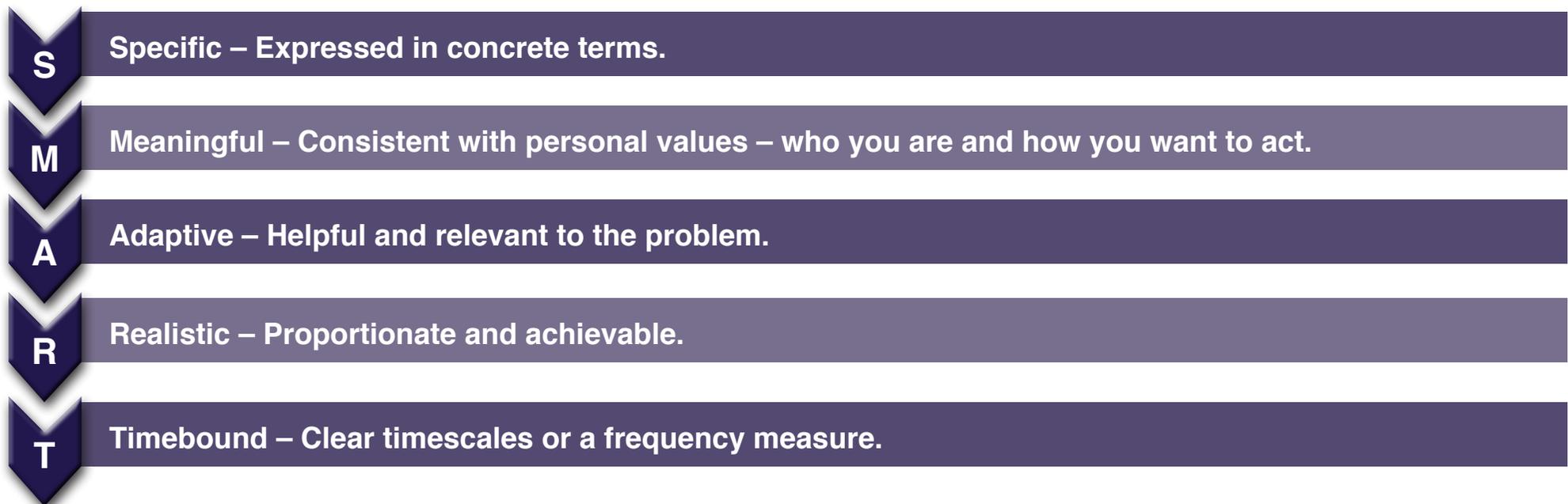


Exercise 2 – Goals for Therapy

Goals are an essential part of the assessment phase in CBT. Having clear goals helps to structure treatment and track progress through the CBT process. Your goals are an expression of what you want to achieve or change in your life. For this reason, it is helpful to express your goals as “Start” rather than “Stop” goals. Start goals take you towards what you want, whereas Stop goals typically focus on attempting to prevent, avoid or control what you don’t want. Stop goals generally don’t work; they can cause a rebound effect and paradoxically shift the focus to worrying about failure. Examples of stop goals include “To be less anxious”, “To stop worrying” or “To avoid arguments”. Avoiding what you don’t want is not the same as moving towards what you do want. Examples of Start goals include “to improve emotional resilience”, “To replace worry with problem solving” and “to learn how to be more assertive”.

Start goals are often expressed using the SMART acronym – Specific, Meaningful, Adaptive, Realistic and Timebound. Well defined goals are consistent with the following SMART criteria:



Use this exercise to identify three concrete goals for therapy. Use the first column to identify the high level goal, the second column to identify small practical steps to achieve the goal and the third column to identify any new skills to support the changes that you want to make. The following examples can be used to model your own goals:

Goal	Small Steps to Achieve the Goal	New Skills and Learning
<p>To learn how to manage my panic attacks and re-engage in travel, exercise, work and social activities within a three month period.</p>	<p>To take a 30 minute walk from home each day. To go to the Gym for 30 minutes twice weekly. To increase the number of stops on my tube journey from 1-4 within a four-week period. To sit in a busy coffee shop on my own for 30 minutes. To take over the family shopping on Saturdays and stand in busy shopping queues.</p>	<p>To understand why my anxiety attacks happen when I am on my own or away from home. To learn techniques to handle negative thoughts when I am anxious. To learn how to ground myself when I feel physically weak or faint.</p>
<p>To improve resilience and assertiveness when dealing with difficult situations.</p>	<p>To make eye-contact when talking in meetings. To take the initiative to say hello to unfamiliar work colleagues each morning. To organise a feedback meeting with my boss every two weeks. To ask my partner to help with two hours of housework per week. To organise shared childcare to allow me to go to the gym and socialise once per week.</p>	<p>To understand why I feel so inadequate. To learn how to replace self-critical thoughts with a balanced and respectful perspective. To develop assertive communication skills. To learn negotiating skills for resolving disagreements and conflict.</p>
<p>To re-engage in meaningful family relationships at home and at work.</p>	<p>To contact named family members or friends by email, phone or SKYPE twice weekly. To organise lunch with a friend on Wednesdays. To walk the dog three evenings after work with the kids. To book cinema tickets or organise an evening out with my partner. To commit to an exercise class once weekly. To plan the menu for the week with my partner.</p>	<p>To understand why I feel this way. To learn how to challenge or let go of negative thoughts. To replace worry with new problem-solving skills. To understand how my negative feelings are triggered and maintained.</p>

Now try to identify your own goals for therapy using the same approach outlined in the examples.

Goal	Small Steps to Achieve the Goal	New Skills and Learning

It's important to update the small steps as you work through the CBT process. This will help maintain momentum towards your high-level goals and keep the CBT process on track. Your Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist can help you to set SMART goals. You can download new goal worksheets from www.thinkcbt.com/worksheets