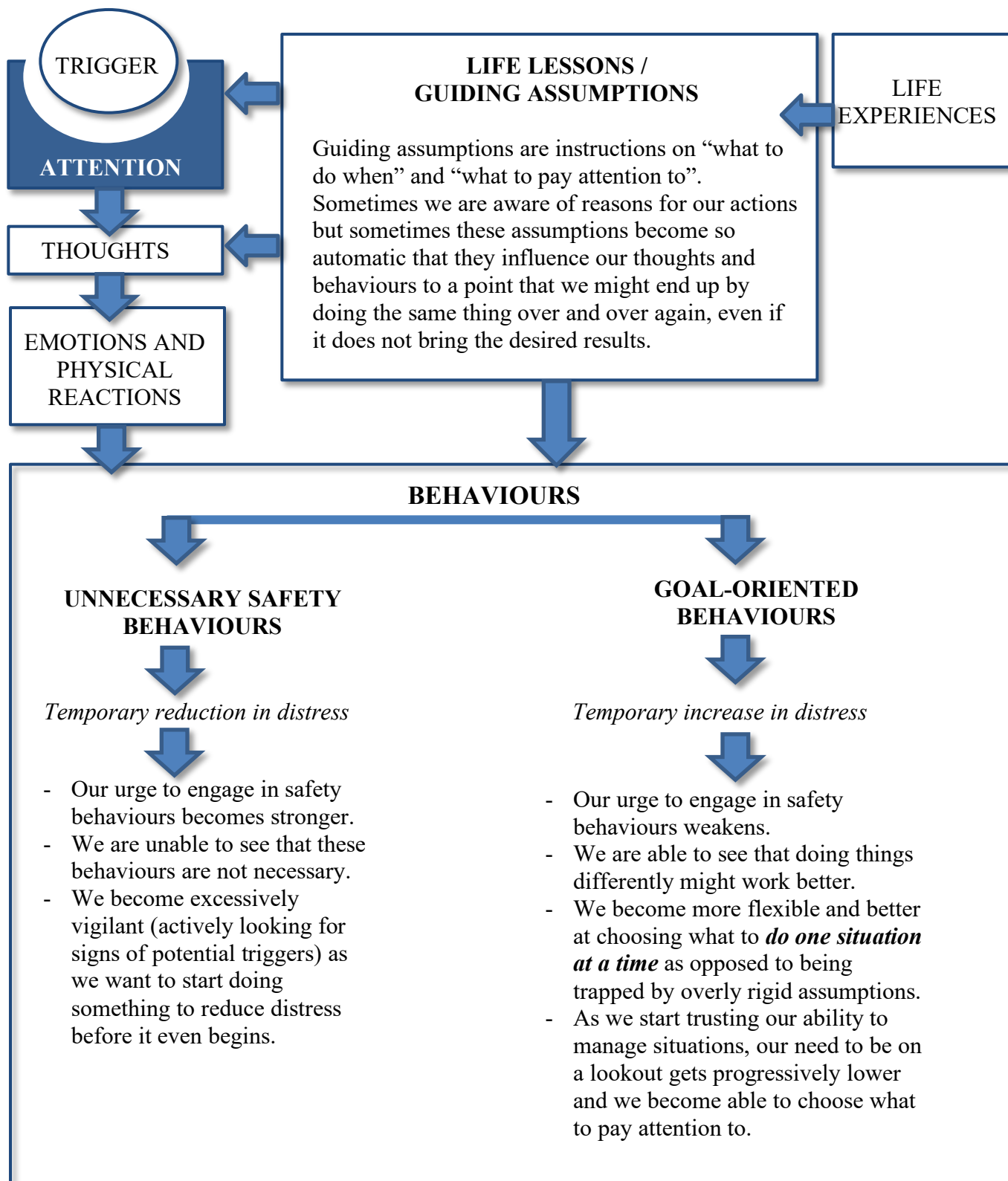




## OVERCOMING ANXIETY - 11

## UNNECESSARY SAFETY BEHAVIOURS AND ASSUMPTIONS THAT REINFORCE ANXIETY





Goal-oriented behaviours might require that we go against our gut and some produce very uncomfortable physical responses (as when you are going through exposure exercises). It might be hard to stay motivated so it might be necessary to remind ourselves why are pushing ourselves the way we do. Yet, it is not sustainable to constantly push ourselves. The key is to remember to distinguish between intended function of our actions (what we hope to accomplish), actual impact (what happens after we do what we do) and that sometimes we might have contradictory goals (e.g., “I want to gain promotion and reduce stress in my life”).

Unfortunately, as we engage in more and more unnecessary safety behaviours, we start believing that not doing what we are doing would bring about more danger. Moreover, we might have developed some safety behaviours at the time when they were necessary (e.g., police officer who maintains high levels of vigilance when dealing with an armed suspect) but then start using them in situation where such behaviours do not apply (e.g. police officer who, despite exhaustion, is unable to fall asleep until everything is quiet).

We can identify some of our guiding assumptions by asking ourselves what we expect will happen when take on new challenges or let go of specific safety behaviours. You can do so by completing sentences below:

If I	<i>let go of worrying</i>	then	<i>I will be caught unprepared (and it's my fault).</i>
	<i>try to (take on this challenge) or stop (this safety behaviour)</i>		<i>this bad thing will happen</i>
If I	<i>go to a crowded place</i>	then	<i>I will have an unmanageable panic attack and humiliate myself in public.</i>
	<i>try to (take on this challenge) or stop (this safety behaviour)</i>		<i>this bad thing will happen</i>
If I		then	
	<i>try to (take on this challenge) or stop (this safety behaviour)</i>		<i>this bad thing will happen</i>
If I		then	
	<i>try to (take on this challenge) or stop (this safety behaviour)</i>		<i>this bad thing will happen</i>
If I		then	
	<i>try to (take on this challenge) or stop (this safety behaviour)</i>		<i>this bad thing will happen</i>
If I		then	
	<i>try to (take on this challenge) or stop (this safety behaviour)</i>		<i>this bad thing will happen</i>

## CHALLENGING UNDERLINING ASSUMPTIONS AND STAYING TRUE TO OUR GOALS - 1

<b>A: TAKE STOCK</b>			
1: Describe the difficult situation that you are facing:			
2: What predictions are you making about this situation? (If these predictions keep you stuck, complete Perspective Taking Worksheet)			
<b>B: RECOGNIZE UNNECESSARY SAFETY BEHAVIOURS AND CLARIFY YOUR GOALS</b>			
1.			
What do you feel like doing?	What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your actions?	What typically happens when you do what you feel like doing?	
2: Be clear about your goals and notice any contradictions			
Goal	How important is this goal to you (0 to 100)?	Can this goal be reconciled with other goals or will it make you work at cross-purposes?	
3: Write a statement that summarizes what you hope to accomplish:			
4: What action steps do you need to take in order to accomplish what you hope to accomplish:			
Action step		Who?	When?
a.			
b.			
c.			
d.			
e.			

## CHALLENGING UNDERLINING ASSUMPTIONS AND STAYING TRUE TO OUR GOALS – 2

### C: CHALLENGE THE ROOTS OF UNNECESSARY SAFETY BEHAVIOURS

1: What makes you uncomfortable about these action steps?

2: Rewrite your apprehensions as an “if-then” assumption (e.g: “If I panic in public, I will be humiliated”, “If I make a mistake, I will be punished”, “If I tell people what I want, then people will abandon me”.)

3: In which situations do you tend to use rely on this assumption?

4: What are the benefits of this assumption?

5: What are the costs of this assumption?

6: In which situations did you need to use this assumption in the past? Where do you think this assumption came from?

7: What is different between now and the time when you had to rely on this assumption?

8: Does this assumption apply to the situation that you are faced with?

9: Can this assumption be modified so it does not interfere with your action plan? If so, write down a more flexible version.

### D: LEARN AND REINFORCE

Implement your plan.

1. What was the outcome of your plan? Stick to the facts.
2. Did the outcome support your apprehensions?
3. Did the outcome support your initial “if-then” assumptions?
4. Compare the levels of distress you experienced before and after having implemented your plan? Which is greater?
5. What are your next steps?