

## Looking for reassurance

This is a very common way of dealing with anxious feelings around uncertainty. Reassurance seeking is helpful in the short term because we usually feel much better once someone has told us everything will be OK, but its effect is generally short lived. Anxious feelings drives the worrier's thirst for reassurance and before long they need more. How does this happen? They may seek reassurance when feelings of uncertainty are triggered. Any certainty that may have emerged as a result of seeking reassurance is both short lived and undermined by *what if* questions as they take the reassurance to pieces. As they do this, the levels of uncertainty increase and the worrier is then driven to demand more reassurance to stave off the uncertainty, and the cycle starts again.

Reassurance has another side-effect that triggers more uncertainty and worry: worriers will often ask the people closest to them for reassurance. Worriers can do this repetitively, which after a while may irritate the people they ask and lead them to respond in a dismissive and unconvincing way or perhaps even to say unintentionally hurtful things — this can trigger more worry.

Seeking reassurance means that we never learn to tolerate uncertainty or take responsibility for our actions. It undermines our confidence in dealing with uncertainty and erodes our confidence in our decision making.

Finally, reassurance seeking can have a corrosive effect on our mood, as we sometimes seek it despite knowing in our heart of hearts that all is well, and then give ourselves a hard time for seeking it in the first place.