Meet Erica who experienced an anxiety problem called illness anxiety disorder

Erica worried that she could have a brain tumour. She had been given a number of tests by her GP and other healthcare professionals over the years and everything had come back clear. This would reassure her for a short while, but it didn’t last for long and her worries would come back that they could have missed something. Worrying about her health and checking for signs of being ill took up a significant part of her day and made her feel very anxious. She would pay attention to her body and notice any changes that happened, for example if she got a headache. This would confirm to her that something had been missed. She used an evidence based approach called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help with her difficulties.

Erica’s physical symptoms
- Tension
- Blurred vision
- Sweating

Erica’s altered thoughts
- “What if he has missed something”
- “If I get a headache it means I do have a brain tumour and will die”
- “If I have got a brain tumour my family won’t cope”

Erica’s behaviours
- Checking for any changes in her vision or other body symptoms
- Avoiding being in rooms with bright lights
- Wearing sunglasses to avoid getting a headache
- Try to avoid headaches by not eating certain foods and not drinking any alcohol
- Going to her GP regularly and asking for help and tests

© Chellingsworth, M., 2016.