

User Guide for the Worth Warrior App

A booklet for young people from stem4



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About

Worth Warrior is a free app created for young people to manage negative body image, low self-worth, and related early-stage eating difficulties or disorders. Created for teenage mental health charity stem4 by Dr Krause, a Consultant Clinical Psychologist, in collaboration with young people, the app uses principles from the evidence-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for eating disorders (CBT-E).

Like all stem4's award-winning apps, it is free, private, anonymous, and safe.

stem4 is a London based teenage mental health charity creating a portfolio of mental health apps for young people and mental health literacy in secondary schools and colleges.

Dr Nihara Krause is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist with many years of clinical practice and is the clinical creator of the stem4 digital portfolio.

stem4 thank the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) for their generous sponsorship of an Invention for Innovation grant that has enabled the development of the Worth Warrior app and this user guide which forms one of three user guides – for Young People, for Parents and Carers and for Health Professionals.

Introduction

Eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder, are psychological conditions that affect eating behaviour and through this, health. Low self-worth and body image issues often lie at the heart of the development of eating issues and an eating disorder, and taking steps early to boost self-worth and challenge negative body image concerns has been shown to help.

By changing these underlying issues early, young people may be able to manage the escalating symptoms of body unhappiness and eating issues. The most important thing to remember is that if you find yourself worried about your negative self-beliefs, you are not alone. By using this guide and the app, we hope you can not only get through this period to protect your mental health as best you can, but also take the first preventative steps to change.

Please note however, that the app does not substitute for the assessment and intervention offered by a mental health professional.

Contents

About low self-worth and body image

Self-worth is a concept that is defined as the way in which you value and respect yourself as a person. It enables you to think positively about yourself, take steps to look after yourself and make positive connections with people.



Body image is the view and opinion you have of your body (or parts of your body) and how accepting, or not, you are of this.

Low self-worth affects your body image negatively and negative body image affects your self-worth, creating a circular pattern of negative thoughts, unhappy feelings and related behaviours.



Some of these behaviours include not eating in a way that looks after your body, not sleeping, not interacting honestly and openly with friends, and turning down doing things you enjoy.

You are more likely to care for your body if you like it.



When negative thoughts about yourself and your body go on for a while they become automatic and you tend not question these, accepting them as the 'truth.'

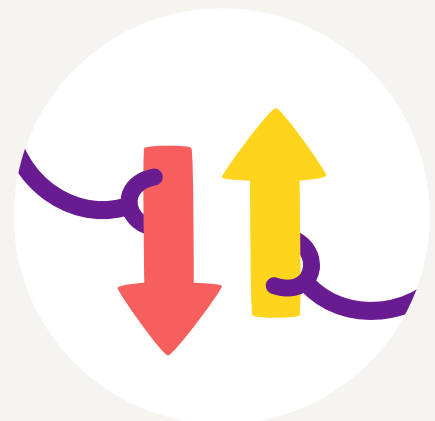
This makes it hard to listen to the good things that people tell you about yourself and instead maintains negativity.

Learning to recognise these negative thoughts, working on replacing them and changing behaviours will help bring about more positive emotions and better connections.



It's important to keep in mind that how we think is affected by the nutrition we provide to ourselves, since our brain needs food to create the chemicals it needs to help with accurate messaging.

For this reason, treatment of eating issues and disorders that arise as a result of negative thoughts and behaviours requires medical monitoring and may benefit from psychological and nutritional treatment.



If you think you have an eating disorder, talk to your doctor. There are some 'red flags' in [Chapter 4](#) to help you recognise some of these (please note the list is not comprehensive). The sooner you get medical and psychological treatment, the faster you will be on your way to getting better.

About the psychological model used in the Worth Warrior app

The Worth Warrior app uses a structure that has emerged from a treatment called Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for eating difficulties and disorders (CBT-E). CBT is a leading and well-researched model and as a result it's called an evidence-based treatment.



The approach is self-explanatory and works on helping an individual understand the interaction between their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. It provides the opportunity to understand your triggers and provides alternative, more helpful ways to cope.

CBT-E was developed in the late 1970s by three clinician researchers called Wilson, Fairburn and Agras and focuses on all forms of eating difficulties. It is a model that encourages changing diet, identifying and challenging underlying unhelpful thoughts, encouraging new behaviours even if they generate some anxiety in order to break habits, and soothing emotions.

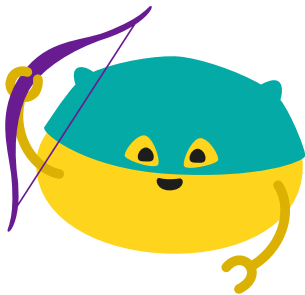
Newer models of CBT for eating disorders in young people have also added elements such as focussing on the effect of social media on body image.

CBT-E has a number of components including:

- Challenging diet 'rules' which usually maintain low weight.
- Journaling negative thoughts and focussing on steps to change.
- Reducing excess behaviours such as binges or problematic exercise.
- Learning about body image, low self-worth and eating disorders.
- Monitoring for risk factors and seeking help.

If you are physically at risk, either because of low weight or because of the effects of various weight management behaviours you are carrying out or because your mood is very low, please note that these physical factors need addressing first in order for psychological techniques to work. This is because our brain needs 'fuel' in the form of food to function properly.

Like any change, it's important to practice applying the model regularly. You also need to give yourself some time to improve.



The archery analogy of the Worth Warrior app is:
To hit a target of worth takes practice and courage. Believe you can do it, keep trying and you will get there.

About and how to use the Worth Warrior app



Worth Warrior is a free app to help young people manage low worth and poor body image leading to eating difficulties and disorders.

Created for the teenage mental health charity stem4, the clinically-led app has been co-designed with input from young people and also user tested by young people.

The app is completely anonymous and does not collect any identifiable data. It has embedded analytics on how helpful it is which provides stem4 with anonymised information on how many young people tell us it is useful and also in terms of feedback.

Using an app such as Worth Warrior is helpful as it can be available whenever you need it. It doesn't use any data and doesn't need Wi-Fi for use.

The Worth Warrior app is a helpful self-management tool; you can learn to change negative thinking and worries, set goals for change, learn to self-reassure, manage difficult feelings and monitor progress whilst working on keeping things in check.

Whilst the Worth Warrior app does not substitute for a treatment plan with a mental health professional, at a time when services are stretched and access to a service can be difficult because of strict guidelines for entry, it can be helpful to have a self-management tool like Worth Warrior to prompt change, help in the long term with how you see yourself and maintain balance.

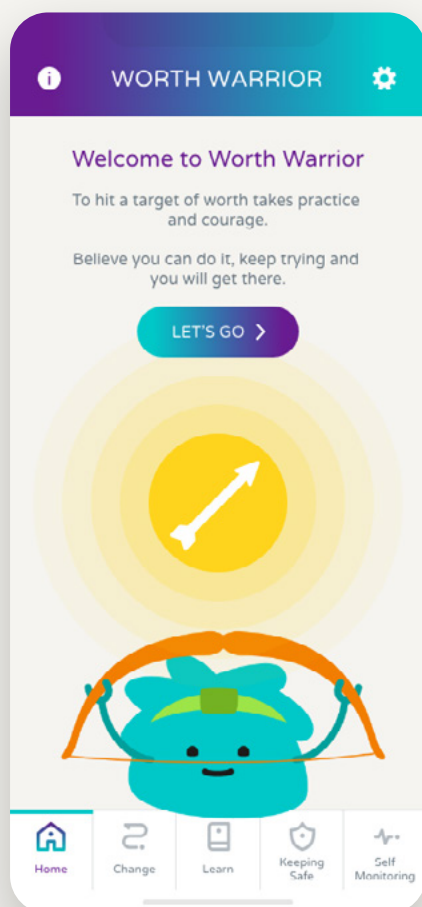
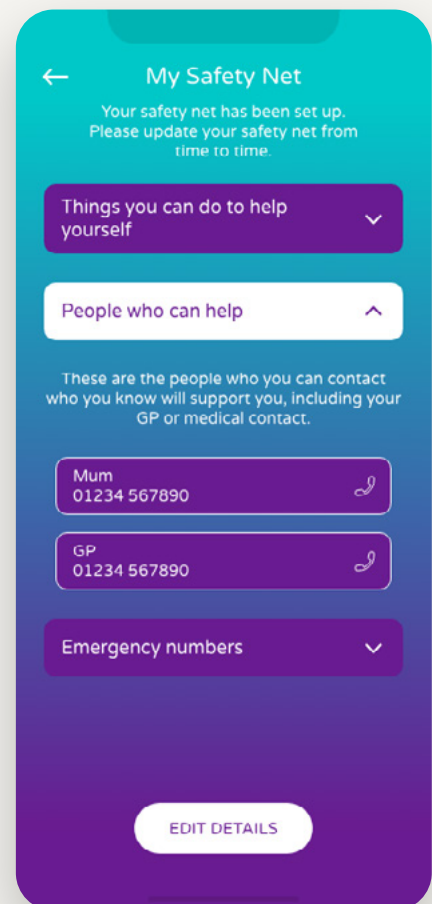
When a user initially downloads the app, they are asked to provide additional information about their age, gender, ethnicity, geographical location and whether they are in treatment.

This data is completely anonymous and helps the Worth Warrior team at stem4 to adapt the app to suit the user even more accurately.

The user will be able to set a passcode if they wish.

They will also be asked to set up a 'safety net' with useful behaviours and thoughts and sections of the app they can use.

This can be done when starting to use the app or as they work through the app. This is to help prompt the user that there are things they can do when their self-worth and body image is low.



The Worth Warrior app uses an archery metaphor to help users manage their low self-worth, poor body image and associated eating and body related difficulties.

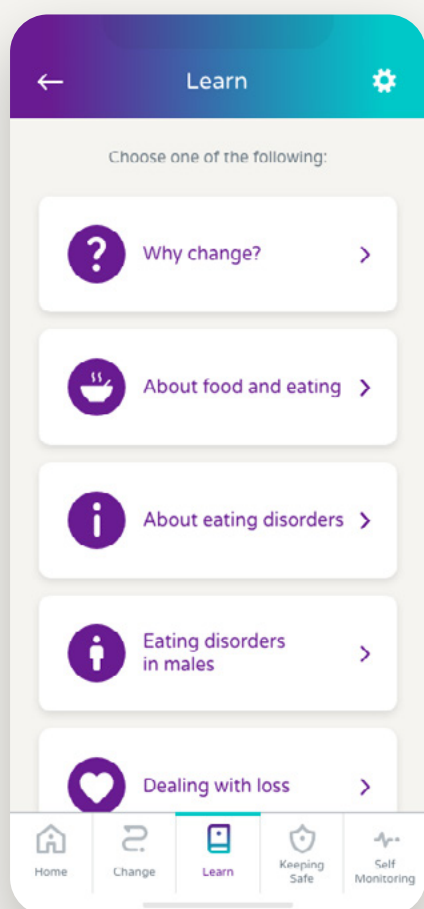
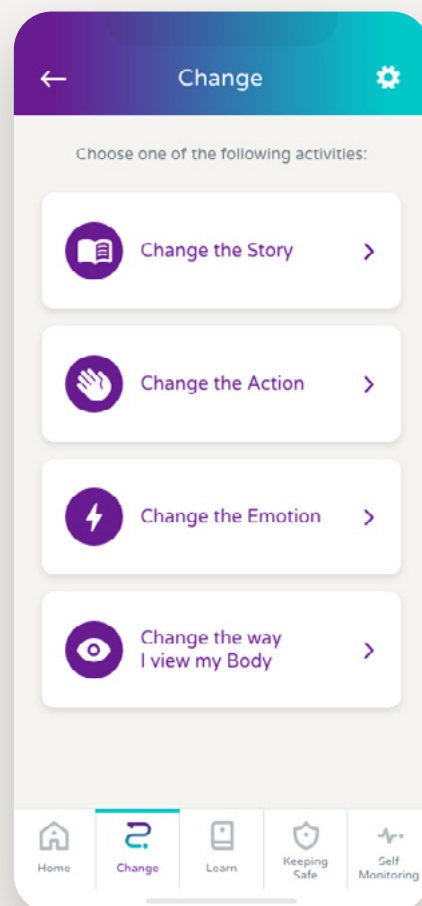
“To hit a target of worth takes practice and courage. Believe you can do it, keep trying and you will get there.”

The main CBT-E element in the app can be found in the *'Change'* section:

The *'Change the Story'* section of the app helps identify negative self-thoughts and teaches users how to substitute positive self-thoughts.

'Change the Action' focuses on identifying negative behaviours and altering them.

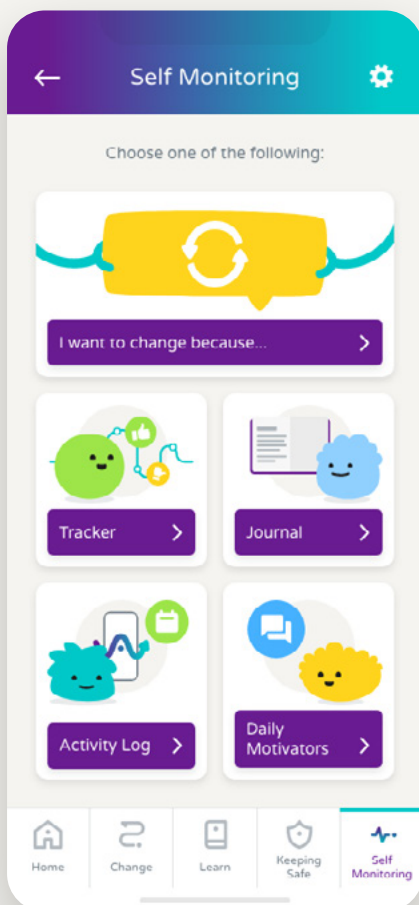
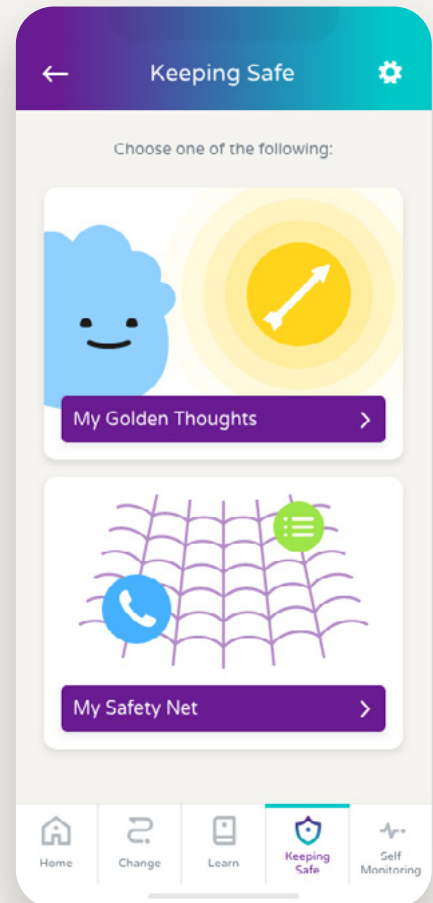
In *'Change the Emotion'* users are provided with alternative, self-soothing behaviours to manipulate their eating and in *'Change the way I view my Body'* users are taught how to separate fact from assumption in terms of body perception.



The *'Learn'* section provides a range of information within the app for users to learn more about eating disorders, such as the importance of regular eating and hunger, the health consequences of eating-related behaviours, and issues that maintain eating disorders.

Other *'Learn'* topics include: eating disorders in males, dealing with loss, dealing with perfectionism (which is very common in this group), and helpful tips on social media and eating disorders.

The *'Keeping Safe'* section allows users to build a 'safety net' of helpful thoughts, behaviours, people to contact, and signposts to help. It also helps users to keep a section of 'golden' arrows which are positive thoughts that they have generated whilst working through the *'Change the Story'* and *'Change the way I view my Body'* sections.



Finally, users can monitor and keep track of which app activities help, record thoughts and feelings in a journal, and view daily motivators (these are encouraging statements).

You can use the app to monitor your thoughts, feelings and behaviours and make change. You can also share your results with a therapist or helpful parents/carers and friends.

Physical risks or 'red flags' to pay attention to

The Worth Warrior team at stem4 encourage you to monitor physical signs and symptoms that indicate that your health may be at risk. The following list might seem scary but the young people we worked with in creating the app told us that it would be useful to know what calls for a visit to the doctor.

This list doesn't cover all possible 'red flag' symptoms, but does provide an idea of the kinds of things to look out for. If you are worried about the physical changes you notice, or feel that your physical health is declining, then even if you don't have any of these red flags already, please get a health check to confirm you are keeping well.

- Weight loss – significant, rapid
- Rapidly fluctuating weight due to binge eating
- Increasing tiredness getting in the way of being able to do the things you would like to
- Stomach aches and pains, especially after eating
- Digestive problems, for example, being constipated
- Mood changes, for example, quick to get angry, anxiety/panic, low mood
- Feeling very cold when the temperature is not particularly low
- Feeling light-headed
- Fainting when you haven't had a history of doing so
- Nutritional problems related to under eating, for example low iron
- Low blood pressure
- Fine hair growth on your body
- Finding it hard to concentrate
- Constant and/or repetitive thoughts about food and body image worries
- Avoiding social situations where there is food and eating
- Aches and pains in your muscles, especially when climbing up-stairs or squatting and standing

- Very low mood
- Being on online sites around body matters, exercise, eating disorders (including social media)
- More frequent fractures
- In females, disruption or stopping of periods
- Numbness and tingling of hands
- Blood in stools or in vomit
- Dry, yellow coloured skin
- Sleep disturbance, especially waking up early in the mornings
- Bloating of stomach

Please make an appointment with your GP or physician. If you are worried about what to say you might like to have a look at the [stem4 asking for help booklet](#).

Signposts and resources

UK

Here are some National UK organisations that you may find helpful:

Mind

US

The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)

The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD)

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Crisis Text Line

Canada

Crisis Text Line

Kids Help Phone (English and French)

Australia

The Butterfly Foundation

Kids Helpline

Registered Charity No 1144506

Email: enquiries@stem4.org.uk

Twitter: [@stem4org](https://twitter.com/stem4org)

Instagram: [@stem4org](https://www.instagram.com/stem4org)

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